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ABSTRACT

The relationship between high academic achievement and personal characteristics is fraught with myths. Three studies examined this relationship in academic high achievers (AHA). Study 1 participants were 529 of 850 members of the New York Phi Beta Kappa (72 percent return) responding to a 1979 mail questionnaire. Study 2 participants were 414 Phi Beta Kappa members (55 percent return) responding to a 1981 mail questionnaire. Study 3 participants were more than 900 of 2,000 Phi Beta Kappas over 50 years old responding to a national mail questionnaire and 20 individuals responding to telephone interviews. Major findings include the following: (1) birth order did not relate to school success; (2) important for academic performance were fair parental treatment and self-discipline; (3) families expected and cultivated high academic achievement; (4) men were more likely than women to believe that academic achievement and life satisfaction were strongly related; (5) the love of learning was learned in homes where parents valued learning and was reinforced in enriched school environments; (6) older AHAs typically rated their physical and mental health as good or excellent, and life satisfaction as positive or very positive--they also indicated high marital satisfaction, positive relationships with children, and close extended family relationships; (7) perceived contributors to life satisfaction were humor, religious beliefs, and good work habits; (8) most AHAs reported good family relationships; and (9) the most common vocational choices were education, professional, and business, with more than half of respondents indicating they were happy with their occupation. (The surveys are appended. Contains approximately 150 references.) (KB)

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TOP OF THE CLASS: GUIDING CHILDREN ALONG THE SMART PATH TO HAPPINESS

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My longtime friend and colleague, Roslyn Hayes, with whom I have coauthored two papers on high academic achievers, aided me in this undertaking every step of the way with her sharp ideas, her critical thinking and analysis, and the kind of assistance that can only come from someone who cares dearly for you. I give her my warm appreciation and immeasurable gratitude. I am indeed fortunate to have had Roslyn in my life.

Bert, my husband for nearly forty years, whom I have known since I was a teenager, has been my staunchest supporter. It was his love and complete understanding that enabled me to fearlessly pursue my goals and dreams. With Bert as my ever helpful and loving mate, there was nothing I felt I couldn't accomplish. I am a better scholar, achiever, wife, mother, and grandmother because he has always been in my corner. He reinforced the support I had received earlier from my father who had imbued in me the belief that I could succeed at whatever I set out to do.

My children, Robin and Susan, "willingly" allowed me to test my child-rearing ideas on them; in the process, they tolerated the mistakes that all parents make along the child-rearing path.

but hopefully, they benefitted far more from my wise decisions. I thank them for their patience with me. The adults they have grown into strongly suggest that their father and I did a lot more things right than wrong.

With Brian and Kevin, my grandchildren, I can again try out my ideas and theories on the upbringing of children, though to a far lesser extent. I hope I prove to be a patient and sage teacher and counselor but above all, a loving and caring grandparent. In attempting to instill the "love of learning" in this next generation, I will be most ably supported by Kevin and Brian's parents, Robin and Michael, who have already demonstrated their love of learning and education.

My past academic writings in journals and books have been largely read by my peers and colleagues. Attempting to write a book, based on carefully researched data, that, hopefully, would be read by professionals and the general public was the challenge before me. Thanks to Joanne Palmer, my editor, for making my words flow more smoothly and for giving them a richer resonance so that this book may now appeal to a larger reading audience.

Introduction

Academic Achievement: A Desirable and Attainable Goal

The blaring media headlines and their accompanying stories criticizing our American educational system for turning out substantial numbers of uneducated or poorly educated people have turned alarmist and shocking. Practically speaking, we have been informed our future high school graduates, and even those with some college, will largely be unable to hold jobs requiring a good basic education. Politicians, educators, and the general public have been aroused by what they call our educational failures.

Parents and expectant parents do indeed have reason to wonder whether our schools can provide their children with the requisite education demanded by a rapidly changing world. Their misgivings about our public school system are fueled by reports and studies that graphically describe the deficiencies in our public school. Some of them, such as "A Nation at Risk," released by the Department of Education National Commission on Excellence in Education, (1983) over ten years ago, are so dramatic in their presentation that they evoke local and federal government promises to initiate programs to remedy the shortcomings. However, these promises never materialize and the memories of both the results of the study and the promises fade away with time.

Reports continue to flow and readers are being told that our students are falling behind in expected levels of performance, especially when compared to students from foreign countries.

The superiority of the education of foreign students is underscored in studies such as the one funded by The American Education Department and the National Science Foundation (Fiske, 1989) in which the school performances of thirteen-year-old American students were compared with their counterparts in thirteen other countries. Not surprisingly the American students scored the lowest on the math and science tests. The authors of this report called the American results "distressingly low and unacceptable, especially in view of the requirements of today's and tomorrow's technological environment."

In their book *The Learning Gap* (1992), Stevenson and Stigler conclude that the dreary scholastic performance of American students is a serious problem that cannot be taken lightly. This was said after they examined children's mathematics scores in Japan, Taiwan, and the United States over a ten-year period and found the American students trailing behind their Asian counterparts, doing more poorly with each passing year. Furthermore, the authors believe their findings are indicative of an overall educational system that is heading downhill; one that doesn't do well when contrasted with those of our major international competitors.

Faced with the improbablity that our public schools will soon heal their weaknesses and unduly eager to strengthen their children's chances to succeed in their future endeavors, many parents have asked for greater control over their children's school programs. One such public school, The Mohegan School in the Bronx, New York City (personal communication, March 9, 1994) included parents in the restructuring and implementation of their new curriculum and the school credits this "true partnership with the community" as being primarily responsible for the "unprecedented level of excellence" it has recently achieved.

Other school districts in cities such as New York, Chicago, and Denver have turned over responsibilities for managing school budgets and curricula to councils comprised of parents, teachers, and administrators. Since too frequently the three parties involved have conflicting agendas that impede cooperative endeavors, many of the schools overseen by these councils have not yet demonstrated the promised academic improvement (Celis, 1994) evidenced at the Mohegan School.

Despite the multitude of reports emphasizing the overall dismal condition of our educational system, there are still those schools noted above, though too few in number, that hold promise for a better future for those students fortunate enough

to gain admission. There are also the special elementary and high schools in many of our major cities, which admit students on the basis of high scores on competitive examinations or on high marks earned in lower grades. However, the available places in these highly rated schools are far fewer than the demand for them and so parents, anxious to provide their children with a good education, seek alternatives when their children fail to qualify for these special schools.

Some of these parents turn to private schools at great financial sacrifice. Others are increasingly employing private tutors—a solution that lengthens the school day for their children, leaving less time for play and rest, and is expensive as well. Concerned parents, believing that a good education is predictive of future career success, are determined to provide their children with the best education possible. After all, it is their children's futures that are at stake.

However, even within the criticized limitations of our educational system, let me reassure parents that there are, and always were, many students attending our regular public schools who do learn and who do become high academic achievers. These youngsters earn excellent grades, usually enjoy their studies, go on to college, and are among the finalists of Westinghouse and other prestigious scholarships. Diane Ravitch, a well-known authority on education (Chira, 1992), agrees with this assessment, but bemoans the drop in the number of such scholars when 1992 is compared to 1972.

The author was such a youngster. I attended public schools through college, was awarded academic honors from the early grades on, and simply loved my academic studies. In college I was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, the national academic honor society requiring very high grades in a liberal arts curriculum that includes language study, mathematics, and science.

Beyond my educational achievements, I can report marrying early and staying happily married to the same man for nearly forty years. I have two married daughters and one has already blessed me with two marvelous grandchildren. Professionally I became a college professor and earned the respect of my students and colleagues. Recently retired from teaching, I am still pursuing scholarly interests and am involved in many other enterprises.

I considered myself blessed to have done so well both professionally and personally. Was I simply a very lucky person or did my academic achievement play a key factor in my career.

marital, and life satisfaction? Was personal fulfillment the payoff for academic achievement? Possibly the great bonus from studying in school is not just a solid education but a high expectancy of vocational, personal, and social success later in life. If this is true, then parents should have two desires: that the educational system is good and that their children put their best efforts into their academic studies.

However, a sample of one could hardly serve to support any educated guesses. Nor would discussions with some of my close Phi Beta Kappa friends who were similarly happily married and satisfied with their lives. I would need to study a substantial number of other academic high achievers and query them about their personal, occupational, and social success later in life.

WHOM TO STUDY?—CHANCE FREQUENTLY ENTERS THE PICTURE

After election to Phi Beta Kappa at Hunter College in New York City in the mid 1950s, I joined the Phi Beta Kappa Association of New York. In a college that has earned a chapter, students are elected to Phi Beta Kappa on the basis of very high academic achievement, typically a record of A– or better for four years. In this country there are 249 colleges with Phi Beta Kappa chapters. There are an estimated 500,000 living members of the organization and, since its founding in 1776, approximately 630,000 have been elected. After election, Phi Beta Kappas are eligible to join one of the fifty regional associations. These associations enable members who have been elected from different colleges throughout the country, but who now live in the same geographical areas, to join together for scholarly and social activities.

By 1977 my good friend and colleague became president and I the secretary of the New York Phi Beta Kappa Association, one of the oldest and largest; presently it has approximately 500 members. I am still actively involved in the New York Association. My attendance at national meetings of the Phi Beta Kappa Society brought me into contact with members from other parts of the country as well. In 1979 I was elected chair of the national Phi Beta Kappa associations and still hold that position.

I frequently commented to my friends and associates on how

satisfied and optimistic these Phi Beta Kappa members seemed to be. They were not preoccupied with their careers but usually chatted about their friends, the social events, plays and parties they attended and their many interests. In no way, except for their sharp minds and fine vocabularies, did they come across as totally absorbed in academic affairs. However, some of my friends doubted that these Phi Beta Kappas were all that much fun to be with.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to test out whether educational achievement and life satisfaction went hand in hand? How fortunate that my position in the Phi Beta Kappa organization gave me access at first to the mailing list of the New York members and then later to a nationwide sample. Here was the opportunity to seek answers to questions that have long intrigued me. I hoped to identify those factors that contribute to academic success and find out whether academic high achievers succeed in areas other than the scholarly.

Some information on the questions that interested me had already been provided by a study conducted at the time City College celebrated the centennial of its college chapter in 1974. In his survey of the post-college life of City College's Phi Beta Kappa graduates, Charles Winick (1974) reported that these promising Phi Beta Kappas turned out to be a highly accomplished group of men (85% of the respondents) and women who were well represented in directories of people of eminence. In large numbers they attended graduate school—with many earning doctorate degrees—and became college teachers, physicians, scientists, and business executives in high proportions. Although many of these Phi Beta Kappas, who included graduates from before 1920 through the 1960s, had parents who had not gone to college, an astounding 98 percent of their children attended college.

Yet the focus in this report was still on the scholarly. Much more could be learned about these *academic high achievers*, or *AHAs* as they will be called from now on—their birth order, their family background and socioeconomic status, their values and attitudes, their physical and mental health, and how satisfied they were with their vocational and personal accomplishments. Are individuals who succeed in school simply people who can only succeed in those areas with demanding scholarly requirements? Do their academic accomplishments limit them from becoming well-rounded individuals, who marry, have children, and enjoy the company of their families and friends? Or

are they successful in their personal and social relations as well? Are they happy, well-functioning adults?

Would It Be Best to Study the "Star" College Students?

Do indulge me again with a personal experience from my public school days. My eighth-grade graduating class decided to do a yearbook that would include drawings depicting the most popular student, the prettiest girl, the handsomest boy, the best athlete, the smartest student, and so on. Readers of this yearbook would have to guess the names of the students from their pictures and brief descriptions, with the answers appearing at the back of the book. One picture portrayed a student reading a book and the description beneath the picture read: "How strange it must be to have brains." "Guess who." The answer to that question was me. Yes, I was that strange student!

Since I had no shortage of friends in school, the words my fellow classmates chose to describe me were not really that upsetting. At least that's the way I remember it. Yet those words conveyed the impression that in some way I was peculiar. Was I really different from the other students? Were my good grades accompanied by personal and social shortcomings? Was I less fun to be with? Was my personality stilted? I didn't think so!

Acquaintances, and even some friends, relish recounting a story about the bright college friend who has made a mess of her marriage or the one who has become a recluse. To me such stories illustrate the sour grapes mechanism. People who are envious of those who did better than they in school look for those instances when the so-called "star students" have slipped. In defense of the excellent students, I always responded that these failures don't represent the majority. Rather, I added that it was my belief that the stars came off very well later on in life. My friends always countered with: "Prove it."

The Challenge Begins

There was little doubt that the studies on the AHAs would permit me to identify the most compelling events and attributes in the development of the academic side of the achiever. Further-

more, in examining the lives of individuals who have reached the zenith of academic achievement, insights might evolve that could help parents guide children in the direction of greater academic success.

But in choosing the Phi Beta Kappa subjects, individuals who certainly were the stars in their school days, would I be affirming or disproving those stereotypic views of the very bright students—those beliefs that support the notion that these academic achievers become one-sided, leaning very strongly to the academic life, or the supposition that in their quest for high grades, they fall short personally and socially? There are still a number of unfounded, and generally unpleasant, impressions that people, including parents, have of those individuals who truly excel in school.

The challenge before me was to discover whether the students with the fine grades became happy and contented citizens. If these scholastic achievers were found to lead successful professional, personal, and social lives as well, then parents would no longer fear that the price for extraordinary academic success would be limited social acumen. Parents want their children to do well in school, as noted earlier, but the idea of "excellence" may frighten some of them. Should these studies dismiss the ill-conceived notions of parents who have accepted the classic sterotype of the "very bright but unhappy and dull" student, then they could urge their children to go the extra mile in their academic studies without fear or hesitation.

As they browse through the introductory chapters of this book before making their decision, prospective book purchasers should now be wondering whether or not long-held beliefs about the gender of outstanding college students, their birth order, their early childhood, their personal and social lives, their friendships, their sense of humor, and their overall life satisfaction will be substantiated or refuted by the studies on the AHAs.

To entice them to read further, at the very beginning of this book let me stack up these beliefs, or myths as I like to call them, against some of the actual findings on the academic achievers. The findings, presented here in brief form, will be compared with some very popular and long-held ideas about very gifted students, and readers are in for some surprises. It is hoped that what readers learn here will serve to tempt them to continue on to the ensuing substantive chapters. They will be rewarded with an abundance of concrete, detailed examples

from the lives of these outstanding academic achievers. They will make other discoveries as well.

THE FINDINGS VS. THE MYTHS

MYTH 1—The oldest male child will fare best academically and professionally.

All of us have endlessly heard that birth order position has an effect on an individual's intelligence and performance. Most researchers, including myself, expected to find real differences among birth ranks and had strong hunches about what these findings would be. Immediately one has to admit that everything in one's life circumstances influences a person. However, birth order was not an important variable in high academic achievement. Much of the existing literature did not hold up among these AHAs when the answers to the following questions were analyzed: Is the oldest child more likely to have the best education? Are the girls neglected with regard to access to higher education? Does a large family hinder a child's educational chances? (chapter 2)

MYTH 2—I. Q. and/or brain power is highly predictive of success in school.

On the basis of my training, my experience, and, most of all, the studies on the academic achievers over all these years, I'm convinced that the relationship between I. Q. and very good marks is neither highly reliable nor extremely high. What these studies, based on over 2,000 academic achievers, demonstrated was the overriding influence of parental encouragement and a love of learning implanted early in life. Without dismissing the need for some basic intelligence, these two factors should be heavily weighted in predicting school success. (chapter 3)

MYTH 3—The best way to learn is through formal education provided by school courses, seminars, and private tutors.

What happened to the old saws about learning by experience, from family members, and by chance? The AHAs appeared to be learning all the time—at school, at home, and in the community. They were often surrounded by parents and grandparents,

as well as uncles and aunts, who passed down information from one generation to the next. Tradition was a very important part of the learning experience. (chapter 3)

MYTH 4—To get "super" adults, parents need to produce "super" babies.

Parents can save a lot of energy, anxiety, and money by not getting on this bandwagon. What the AHAs are as adults has little or nothing to do with the current craze to give every sort of instruction and material benefit as early as possible. Parents need to be reminded that there is an optimum time to learn each skill and no amount of pushing changes that fact.

Most of the AHAs were reared at a time where there were no televisions, no computers, and no programmed classes. Their parents were not registering them for elite private schools at the tender age of six months. What their parents did do for them was to create the type of environment that cherished and encouraged reading, learning, and education. It was their love of learning that was primarily responsible for their success in school and in life. (chapter 3)

MYTH 5—All work and no play make Jack a dull boy.

There is apparently some impression that the child who does homework and the adult who gives up a party to finish an assignment are leading dull lives. The missing ingredient here is the enjoyment and the satisfaction that the AHAs get from solving a problem, completing an assignment, and writing a paper. The love of learning that characterizes them and brings them pleasure dispels the implications of this myth. (chapters 3 & 5)

MYTH 6—Spare the rod, spoil the child.

It's difficult to believe but this view is still prevalent in some quarters. There are parents who believe that by instilling fear in their children, they will do their chores, do their homework, and get good grades in school. The parents of the excellent students in these studies did not use fear to discipline their children. These AHAs were neither mistreated nor spoiled. Instead the rules and responsibilities that they were obliged to fulfill were handed down by parents who reared their children with a great degree of fairness, respect, and love. In time these achiev-

ers acquired the necessary self-discipline that was critical to their success in school. (chapter 4)

MYTH 7—"Brainy" people will probably not be vocationally, socially, and personally happy.

Two studies addressed this issue. One was regional, primarily confined to those Phi Beta Kappas living in the metropolitan New York area, and the second study was of 915 older Phi Beta Kappas who responded to a mailing to two thousand members of the organization, all over the age of fifty, living in all fifty states.

The members of the New York Association expressed marital, vocational, and life satisfaction, clearly demonstrating the falseness of this myth. The response rate of 55% in this study gave me an assurance that I was sampling the expressed feelings of the majority of those to whom the questionnaires were sent.

The third study of the older Phi Beta Kappas revealed that they perceived themselves as enjoying good physical health, rated themselves mentally healthy, and chose the favorable options on the career, marital, and life satisfaction questions. (chapters 5, 6, and 7)

MYTH 8—Highly educated women are unlikely to marry.

The relevant questions were asked of the large female sample and the truth is that most of them married and claimed long-lasting, happy marriages and real emotional satisfaction. Education beyond college, especially professional education, often is the trade-off for later marriages but nonacademic achievers also delay marriage for a variety of reasons. Parents need not fear that their bright daughters would be foregoing marriage for their careers. In this day and age, women can certainly combine a career with marriage and children, if they wish to do so. On the other hand, women can also opt not to marry. (chapters 5 and 7)

MYTH 9—Book knowledge and practical common sense are very different and usually mutually exclusive.

There is no doubt that the AHAs strongly belie the truth of this myth. They are leading fulfilled lives, vocationally and personally, and appear to be enjoying themselves. Their academic skills aided them significantly in the accomplishment of their profes-

sional goals but these AHAs also acquired the savvy that enabled them to handle situations, both professionally and personally, in a very practical manner as well. (chapters 5, 6, and 7)

MYTH 10—Smart people are bookworms.

Well, unlike the other myths, which were knocked down by what was learned about the AHAs, this myth receives weighty evidence from the data, with one caveat. The academic achievers would be proud to be called bookworms if this term is used to describe the great pleasure they derive from reading. However, if this term were being used to identify a group of people who bury their heads in books, impervious to the world around them, then they would loudly shout "No Way" to such a description. To the contrary, these academic achievers are very much aware of everything around them. (all chapters)

TRUTH NOT MYTH—Hope for Every Child to Become an AHA

This professor emerita truly believes that most children can accomplish a great deal academically when properly prodded and supported by their parents, their teachers, and society at large. This statement was derived from the research on the AHAs who served as the subjects for *Top of the Class* as well as from the observations of thousands of college students from diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds through four decades of teaching.

Every child *can* become an AHA provided that he or she has some basic intelligence, a family who can provide life's fundamental essentials and encourage that child's goals and dreams, an educational system that demands the optimum from both its students and teachers, and the "little bit of luck" we all need to make it in this world. Hopefully, the lives of the AHAs will be both informative and inspirational for those parents who are earnest about giving their children the finest opportunities to develop their inherent abilities and talents. Parents will also find suggestions here as to how to demand the best from a public school system that still has the capability of producing outstanding scholars, despite its imperfections. It is my firm conviction that our nation's teachers will be more than willing to join them in realizing this goal. As far as a little luck, all parents have to pray that the chance factors that befall their children in life will be more positive than negative.

1

The Research Design: Strengths and Limitations

Selecting the Subjects and the Topics

The subjects for these studies on AHAs came from two sources, the New York Phi Beta Kappa Association and a nationwide sample. It should be noted that the New York members were not necessarily native to this region; they were working and living in that area at the time of the studies. The older sample, as was noted earlier, was drawn from across the United States.

Questionnaires could be designed to probe the factors that had long intrigued me. But where to start? The research findings on birth order, which almost unanimously supported the notion that the oldest male child in the family was the brightest and the best educated, sparked the initial study. The first questionnaire designed to elicit information on birth order was mailed to members of the New York Phi Beta Kappa Association. (Appendix A)

From a mailing to 850 Phi Beta Kappas, responses were received from a remarkable 72%. Forty percent of them were from men and 60% from women. Of the 529 who responded, a few more than 50% were under the age of 30. While in the process of analyzing the results of this first questionnaire, I was already formulating questions for the next survey.

The second questionnaire, designed to be distributed to this same association, was concerned with vocational satisfaction, family relationships and life satisfaction. Although the second

survey (Appendix B) was mailed out two years later in 1981, there is little doubt that many of the respondents were among those who had answered the survey on birth order. The average age of our subjects in this second study was 42, but they ranged from 20 to 90 years. The 414 respondents (261 women and 153 men) represented a 55% return.

After publishing the results of these first two studies in professional journals in collaboration with my close colleague, Roslyn Hayes, this larger national study was undertaken with Ms. Hayes providing assistance and sound counsel. By now the climate of public opinion had begun to focus on aging and as we were both getting older, we wondered how well AHAs fared in later life and whether their strong academic interests had prepared them well for their later years.

Questionnaires (Appendix C) were sent to two thousand Phi Beta Kappas over the age of fifty, drawn from the national mailing list. Usable responses came from over 900. The results of this third and largest study on older Phi Beta Kappas will be published for the first time in this book. I also had the pleasure of speaking at great length to twenty subjects from a group who had identified themselves as willing to be interviewed. Throughout this book, the results from all three studies, including the telephone interviews, will be discussed.

As these Phi Beta Kappas, or AHAs, were studied, the more I learned. Learning was not from hearsay, not from parents' association meetings, not from psychology texts or education books, but from self-collected data from a fascinating group of people. As their habits, customs, and beliefs emerged, I became convinced that there was a message for parents that could serve to make their child-rearing days more effective. Chance and personal backgrounds must affect every researcher; I keenly appreciated the unique opportunity to study this special group of high achievers—these Phi Beta Kappas.

GOOD RESEARCH STILL HAS SOME BIASES

Supported by a great deal of solid data, I believe the findings on these AHAs are valid and will be meaningful and useful to the reader. Although the chapters will provide sufficient information for most readers, there are those individuals who might wish to probe more deeply into the finer details of the research. They are directed to the tables in the Appendices.

However, I still have to admit to certain biases inherent in this research. There is the fact that there may well be differences between the nonrespondents and the responding subjects, but the exceptional rate of response encourages confidence in these findings. There are also those students who are high academic achievers, are elected to Phi Beta Kappa, and then become dropouts from life due to mental or physical illness, alcoholism, personal tragedy, or other misfortune. They have not been personally located or questioned for this book.

Phi Beta Kappas were chosen to represent the AHAs but I recognize there are many academically strong students who are not Phi Beta Kappas. With less than 300 of the approximately 2,000 four-year colleges in this country housing Phi Beta Kappa chapters, there are many AHAs who have not had the opportunity to be elected to this honor society. However, there are other honor societies, such as Sigma Xi, the nationally recognized science society, which elects students who excel in specific areas of study. Readers should not get the impression that only Phi Beta Kappas can be labeled AHAs.

Neither ethnicity nor religious affiliation was asked for in the questionnaires. As far as the two New York-based studies, my co-author and I were familiar with just about every member and there were only a few who were black, Hispanic, or Asian at the time we collected the data. As far as the larger national sample of older AHAs, I have reason to believe that the situation is similar because over the years I have attended the large national Phi Beta Kappa conferences held every three years and observed very few people who were other than white. So on these grounds, I have concluded that the AHAs were drawn essentially from a white, middle-class population; although I believe that the makeup of the larger pool of AHAs is now changing in the direction of diversity.

There are few data on how many respondents are wealthy or come from wealthy families. In the second study with subjects living in the New York area, we asked a question on annual income. Many of the younger respondents who were living with their parents probably reported their family incomes. For the married subjects, we were getting the income of subject and spouse. At any rate, the maximum income listed was $100,000+ and about 8% were in that category.

The general impression from analyzing the responses was that most of these Phi Beta Kappas were not rich or possibly that the very wealthy were not active in the New York associa-

tion. In the larger national sample of older AHAs, there is some information on the respondents' own views on their finances and this material will be discussed in the book.

I am well aware that any study, no matter how broad and representative the sample, is time bound, and there will be references made to generational differences in the discussions. I have tried to identify the sources of bias in my work and caution the reader that I can only report on what was found from the data and what I believe from my life experiences.

UNIQUE ASPECTS OF OUR STUDIES OF AHAS

Though a narrow slice of the population was studied, I take pride in the unique feature of this research in that the subjects have been college graduates spanning the twentieth century to date, covering an age range of over seventy years of adulthood. However, this book is *not* really a study of high I. Q. individuals, such as those followed in Terman's classic study (Holahan & Sears, 1995; Terman, 1954). That work, begun in 1921, selected children on the basis of "genius" I.Q. and followed them through their adult lives and into retirement. Although I.Q. scores were not asked of the subjects of this book, there is every reason to believe that many of them would have qualified for Terman's study. Terman's exceptionally bright children grow into highly educated, prosperous and satisfied adults and are "by and large good and successful people by common standards." (Rafferty, 1984). Readers interested in longitudinal narratives of intellectually gifted young people will find the recent book on high I.Q. students entitled *Genius Revisited: High I.Q. Children Grown Up* (Subotnik, Kassan, Summers & Wasser, 1994) most rewarding. Here is is a marvelous follow-up of an adult population who had attended an exceptional New York City high school for the intellectually gifted.

This book is *not* a study of a selected group of creative individuals, such as the one by Torrance (1977), who carried out a twelve-year follow-up study of 254 high school students who had been identified as creative in 1959. Torrance was pleased to report that they had grown into "productive, creative achievers." A very good collection of studies on the gifted and talented is contained in the book *Beyond Terman: Contemporary Longitudinal Studies of Giftedness and Talent* (Subotnik & Arnold, 1994), and the *International Handbook of Research and Devel-*

opment of Giftedness and Talent (Heller, Monks & Passow, 1993) should also give readers a comprehensive overview of the research and theory on the gifted as well as suggestions on how to educate gifted youngsters. The works of author Robert S. Albert, who has written extensively on the gifted because of his interest in the achievement of eminence, are also highly recommended (1978, 1980, 1983, 1990).

The subjects of this book would certainly *not* be classified as prodigies—individuals who have extraordinary talent in a single area that tends to outdo their abilities in other areas. Such exceptional talents frequently are within the artistic or mathematical fields. There have been child prodigies identified over the centuries and the descriptions of some modern-day ones appear from time to time in popular magazines and make for very interesting reading (Levine, 1986/87).

Nor were the subjects of this book chosen from amongst captains of industry, great inventors, eminent scientists, political leaders, or outstanding artists, although there may be some of these among them. Though academic excellence does not preclude eminence in any field of study, outstanding school performance alone doesn't qualify an individual for celebrity status in his or her chosen profession.

Anne Roe (1952), for example, looked at the intelligence, achievement, personality, and family background of 64 eminent American scientists. She found that a large number were firstborns, who had already expressed a strong desire to be independent in their early childhood and were found to have a "driving absorption in their work." Michael (1977) contrasted the personality styles of creative physical scientists with those of creative mathematicians and found that mathematicians tended to be more self-assertive and harder-working while the scientists were more concerned with humanitarian needs, but both groups were emotionally stable, autonomous, and individualistic. Additionally, numerous authors, too many in fact to list, have written biographies of outstanding political leaders, writers, artists, and musicians.

The AHAs described in this book were selected exclusively on the fact that they had received college grades so high that they were elected to Phi Beta Kappa. Contrary to many other studies, this one includes *many* females. These AHAs were not from poverty-stricken households but were essentially from white-middle-class homes. Many of the older subjects were the children of immigrants and probably a few came from affluent fam-

ilies. Presumably, their parents were neither unemployed nor truly hungry during the Great Depression. Nevertheless, there is no reason why personal insights drawn from the study of these high achievers would not apply to the rearing and teaching of all children regardless of economic class or ethnicity.

Who Should Be Interested in The Findings and Why?

In my opinion research should not be conducted solely for scholarly publications nor for a limited readership consisting primarily of scholars and professionals. The aim of this book is to communicate the findings on these academic achievers, and the practical applications derived from these data, to *all* readers—parents, educators, young and older adults.

Research should also have practical applications. In examining the lives of individuals who have done extremely well in their academic studies, in their professions, and in their personal lives, it is hoped that parents will be provided with some insight into how they can guide their children in the direction of greater academic achievement. Support from parents is extremely potent in encouraging youngsters to excel in school, and parental attitudes toward learning can have enduring influences on their children's academic and professional futures.

Today many children live in homes where both parents work and so these children spend much time in child care facilities or with home care providers. Yet parents still have the greatest leverage with respect to their children's upbringing. It is the parents who select the child care providers and it is still the parents who are charged with providing their children with loving, consistent, and dependable care. The thoughts and ideas on child rearing and the principles based on the information collected in these studies should be relevant for these modern parents.

Educators will be especially cheered and uplifted as they read of the significant role teachers played in the educational success of these academic achievers. These achievers had the encouragement of good teachers who inspired them. Young adults, who are still wondering about the long-lasting benefits of their educational studies, should take heart from the rewarding stories of these outstanding students.

All readers, young and old, will discover the staying power of the love of learning and the everlasting happiness it brought to

these academic achievers who were wise enough to embrace it early in their lives. Yet the acquisition of love of learning knows no age barriers and to those who have not yet incorporated it into their lives, this book should stimulate you to do so.

Our newspapers and media are replete with stories about the woes of homelessness addiction, AIDS, violence, child and adult abuse. Some books and articles are written about possible solutions; others claim that these conditions are beyond solution. Studying academic high achievers involved looking at the lives of academic and professional successes and, in some way, a road to the solution of our ills may stem from understanding how such individuals are raised and nurtured.

Reading lists are already replete with child-rearing, parenting and educational books offering advice on how to raise a brighter child or a happier child or a higher-achieving child. To support their recommendations, most rely on well-reasoned assumptions and conjectures; not on data amassed after children have been reared following the counsel and wisdom offered in these books. *Top of the Class* is different in that it starts with individuals who have had outstanding scholastic careers and then attempts to identify those child-rearing techniques and teaching procedures that influenced their achievements.

Furthermore the author is well aware of the criticisms of books that stress only a single feature of the individual's development—often it is intellectual growth. *Top of the Class* focuses on many aspects of the lives of these achievers and explores whether the path to educational achievement was also the path to a productive and happy life.

The findings have also revealed some of the merits and flaws of our American educational system. Many of the studies of our educational system have focused on the failings of our school system, dropout students, and delinquents. Yes, there are those reports that appear in the press from time to time about a special school doing something right, but there are too few nationwide studies on successful students. This work, based on high academic achievers, permits me to suggest ways to improve the educational process and school curricula.

Top of the Class is based on one of the few retrospective studies of academic high achievers; men and women who were chosen without regard to or knowledge of I. Q. or any other intellectual capacity but only on their superior college grades. Can we generalize from these superior students to the wider school population? It is my firm belief that many youngsters

can become AHAs. Becoming an AHA, however, does not necessarily mean election to Phi Beta Kappa nor being first in the class. Rather it denotes an individual who uses his or her capabilities to the fullest and who pursues learning and education for their intrinsic values, not simply as the means to higher grades or a higher-paying career.

I think I know what makes an AHA tick. I feel comfortable with this statement because the studies did not stop when these AHAs finished college or even graduate school but the large third study involved AHAs beyond the age of fifty. Questions about whether these AHAs had regrets about their dedication to learning were included along with questions about whether their academic orientation interfered with their family relationships. It can't be claimed that they are all social successes but there is enough data to rest fears that they had limited social ties.

2

Birth Order: Does It Matter?

Some Thoughts on Birth Order

When they record conversations with their patients, therapists frequently transcribe responses that start with: "I was the oldest son," or "I was the baby in the family until my brother came along." Their patients also make references to their position in the family constellation to explain either personal weaknesses or strengths. Statements such as: "I am spoiled because my mother coddled me, the youngest in the family," or "My parents expected me, the oldest, to do the best," are commonly heard in therapeutic sessions. Therapists have long recognized that birth order offers a good scapegoat for shortcomings and jealousies.

Biographers and novelists employ birth order references to provide their readers with clues about the temperament of their characters and open their stories with: "John was the oldest of two sons" or "Mary was the baby of the family." In identifying the birth order positions of the men and women in their stories, authors are tapping into commonly held opinions on the relationship between birth order and personality traits. In fact, writers, therapists, and all the rest of us, who have heard so many conversations peppered with references to one's place in the family constellation, no longer doubt the impact of birth order on one's personality.

There is every reason to believe that birth order assumes a conspicuous place in one's family life. After all, children are always aware of having older or younger brothers and sisters, and

their relationships with their siblings, whether good or bad, affect them for their entire lives. As grownups, individuals still refer to their siblings as either being older or younger than they, indicating how meaningful birth order positions are in the minds of all people.

Parents have been known to impose a strong family trait or interest on the firstborn and often the other children in the family are compared to the oldest one on this characteristic. The father who is sports-minded takes his child to sporting events and encourages the child, especially the son, to take up sports. If the family enjoys music, their firstborn is sent for music lessons. Older children, when they are adept at the forced-upon trait, are often held up as successful role models for their younger brothers and sisters to emulate. The impact of such comparisons among children can be either positive or negative, depending on how well endowed the younger child is with respect to the ability being compared.

On the other hand, by the time the youngest child comes along, parents may have grown more tolerant and less may be demanded of that child. Older brothers and sisters are often expected to be equally forgiving of their younger siblings' foibles and this might provoke some resentment. Older children have been known to call out: "How come he can get away with that?"

Now what about the relationship between academic achievement and birth order? Do parents expect more from one child than the other? Generally speaking, the oldest male child was presumed to be the choice candidate for best student, most educated, and most successful. Typically the firstborn is described as being hard working, scholarly, and conscientious; traits that would enable him to do extremely well both in school and on the job.

However, is there any validity to these widely accepted assumptions and views of the oldest male children? Should we expect the oldest, especially if they are male, to be the best students, the best workers, and the most successful in life? Similarly, should we forecast that middle and younger children will aim for less in life, partially because their parents expect less from them?

Researching the Birth Order Effect

The earliest studies, and some later ones as well, focused on the overrepresentation of firstborns among special groups of

eminent people, individuals who made notable contributions in the fields of science, music, or public affairs. Galton (1874) might have been at the vanguard in this area of inquiry when he noted the prominence of firstborns among accomplished British men of science. In a more extensive piece of research, Ellis (1904) reported on the predominance of firstborns among outstanding British figures. Recent studies have found firstborns are conspicuous among classical music composers (Schubert, Wagner, Schubert, 1977) and among United States Presidents and Prime Ministers (Albert, 1980).

Psychology and child development literature, as a whole, are replete with references to birth order and gender effects in families. In his bibliography of birth order studies, Forer (1977) cites 375 titles, including 60 dissertations of birth order studies published between 1970 and 1976, indicating the strong interest in birth order as a research variable. This article is only one among fourteen articles on birth order in that single issue of the *Journal of Individual Psychology* (1977).

The large number of studies focusing on the relationship between birth order and achievement were especially of interest because of the long-held views that firstborns would do best in their academic careers. Schachter (1963), studying a random sample of Columbia College freshmen from two-child families during the years 1943 to 1962, found that the percentages of firstborns in these years ranged from 52.5 to 66. In his review article, Bradley (1968) reported on the overrepresentation of firstborns in our colleges in the 1960s.

Altus (1966), studying freshmen at a University of California campus during the years 1960 to 1963 reported that among freshmen coming from two-child families, 63 percent of them were firstborn. Those freshmen who were one of three or four children also were predominantly firstborns, namely 50.5 percent of them were the oldest. Altus also points out that the colleges with the most stringent entrance requirements have the largest numbers of firstborns.

However, studies by Epstein and Bronzaft (1972) and Schooler (1972) found the cohort populations from which samples for these college studies were selected had overall higher percentages of firstborns. This could explain the higher proportions of firstborns present in the college populations during the 1960s.

Conducting his research somewhat differently, and correcting for the possible impact of larger numbers of firstborns in the

cohort populations of the studies cited above, Breland (1973) identified the distribution of birth orders among the 1965 National Merit Scholarship participants. He considered these distributions when he noted the birth orders of those who scored in the top 5 percent that year. Breland also investigated the birth order effect in different family sizes. Firstborns predominated in the two-child through the five-child families and he concluded with some confidence that firstborns were indeed the highest achievers.

Studies (Albert, 1980; Gaynor & Runco, 1992; Zajonc, 1976; Zajonc & Markus, 1975) also have addressed the influence of sibling spacing on intellectual abilities. It was thought that large or small differences between two siblings might influence the parental treatment of these children; in some cases to the advantage of the older child and in others to the younger. For example, according to Adlerian theory, each of two children far apart in age tends to be treated as an only child, and so the issue of the oldest or the youngest is erased.

Wagner, Schubert, & Schubert (1985) suggested that close spacing between children would be deleterious to intelligence and achievement. Albert (1980) believed that a child with a large age interval from the next child may have more time to develop creative skills.

Scores on special skills tests have been viewed as a function of the number of siblings in the family by Runco and Bahleda (1986), who reported that children with several siblings did better on divergent thinking verbal tests than only children. In their recent study, Gaynor and Runco (1992) state that: "The number of siblings was unrelated to a child's creative talents," indicating some inconsistency in this line of research. However, Gaynor and Runco still believe that parents interact with their children differently depending on their ages, the size of the family, their gender, and their birth order position.

There have also been suggestions that firstborns are more compliant than laterborns, with the expectation that they should do less well on tests demanding creative ability. However, actual research findings have been contradictory on the issue of whether firstborns or laterborns will score higher on creative tests (Eisenman, 1964; Eisenman & Schussel, 1970; Lichtenwalner & Maxwell, 1969; Staffieri, 1970).

Treating the topic of birth order in a lighter, more humorous fashion, Kevin Leman in *The Birth Order Book* (1985) described the powerful influences birth order has on our personalities.

even extending to our marital and career choices. Although *The Birth Order Book* identified the strengths of each of the different birth orders, Leman agreed with the previous researchers in acknowledging the leadership qualities of the firstborn. He cites their great number among *Who's Who in America* and *American Men and Women of Science*.

There is, however, a group of behavioral scientists who believe that the order of birth matters little in shaping personality (Plomin & Daniels, 1987). The family still remains significant in influencing children's behavior, but it may be the closeness to the father rather than birth order that influences a child's achievement (Daniels, 1986). Dr. Daniels has been quoted in a New York Times interview as follows: "You know almost nothing about a kid from knowing if he is the oldest or the youngest." (Goleman, 1987). After examining over one thousand birth order studies, Ernst & Angst (1983) concluded, as did Dr. Daniels, that birth order does not appear to have much influence on I. Q., school achievement, or personality.

The contradictory findings on birth order reminded me of that somewhat dated hair coloring advertisement: "Does she or doesn't she?" With birth order, the question was: "Does it or doesn't it matter?" Very much interested in this question, especially with a population of high achievers, further exploration of birth order effects appeared to be very much in order.

Our Study of Birth Order Positions

A colleague of mine and I had mentioned in several of our conversations whether being the firstborn in our families could have had something to do with our good grades in school. What each of us also had in common was a younger sister who was less interested in doing well in school than we were. We also speculated about the prevalence of firstborns among academic high achievers. As members of the New York Phi Beta Association, our question could so readily be answered with a birth order study on this population. Familiar with much of the literature, I must confess that we expected our research to agree with the findings supporting the role of the firstborn as the academically most successful child in the family.

A detailed questionnaire was sent to 850 academic high achievers (AHAs) who were members of the Phi Beta Kappa Association of New York. When we put aside the 100 question-

naires that wereeither returned by the post office for nondelivery or deemed not usable, we had 529 remaining, representing a net return of 72 percent. Seven of these came from twins and these were treated separately. The study dealt mostly with 522 respondents, a very appreciable number (Hayes & Bronzaft, 1979).

After tallying our 522 subjects by family size, we found that the largest number, 229, came from two-child families. There were 84 only children, 129 three-child families, and 52 four-child families; the remainder came from families with five to eight children. Thus, we had a good number of only, oldest, middle, and youngest children in our study.

In terms of census data, the 84 only children apparently constitute some overrepresentation. This finding appears to support the more recent literature (Falbo & Polit, 1986; Meller, 1990) that indicate that only children do as well as firstborns and individuals from small families on intelligence and achievement measures, rather than the earlier reports which were of the opinion that only children were at a disadvantage.

We grouped our subjects, who ranged in age from 22 to 95, into age groups of ten years, and then used a statistical test to determine whether older subjects came from larger families than younger ones. We found no relationship between age and family size and can report with confidence that our subjects in all age groups came from families of different sizes. In other words, age of subject was not related to family size.

Are AHAs More Likely to Be Firstborns?

Our major interest was whether the firstborn position was prominent among these achievers. Since only children are both the firstborn as well as the lastborn, they were not placed in either category and the information on birth order was examined for those families of two and more siblings. One of our clear findings is that in the very common two-child family, where we had the largest number of subjects, there is an *equal chance of a younger or older child being an AHA*.

In the three-child families, 41 percent of the AHAs were oldest children and 59 percent were not. This 41 percent is somewhat higher than the 33⅓ percent expected by chance. The preponderance of oldest children occurred only in the 20 to 29 year old group in our study, not in the other age groups, and might have had an undue influence on the finding. In the other family

sizes, those with four or more children, birth order was again not a critical variable. Birth order apparently did not have predictive value for high grades in school in our sample of AHAs.

Did Sibling Spacing Make a Difference?

We dealt with the issue of spacing in our two-child families, the largest group, and noted a wide range of age intervals, ranging from one to 15 years; with a spacing of three to four years as the most prevalent. We found no statistical differences related to spacing. We do not believe that the intelligence or academic achievement of our AHAs was influenced one way or the other by sibling spacing.

Are the Oldest Boys the Smartest? How about the Girls?

According to the long and widely held notion of the importance of the first male child, our male AHAs might be expected to be mostly firstborns. This certainly was not the case. The fact is that in the two-child family 38 male AHAs were firstborns and 50 were younger children.

Gender, like birth order in general, did not play an important role in the prediction of academic achievement. We had no difficulty locating women for our study because the membership of the New York Phi Beta Kappa Association is more than 50 percent female. Daughters were apparently given great encouragement to become as well educated as sons. Only one subject in our study reported that he was treated better than his female sisters: "I was the single male, a middle child among six sisters, and the only one to earn a college degree."

As with the male subjects, there was no birth order effect in the two-child family for the women; 74 female AHAs were older children and 67 were younger.

Are Twins at a Disadvantage Academically?

Though only seven of our respondents were one of a set of twins, this small sample is really fascinating, but too small for conclusions. Five of our seven twins had sisters while two had brothers. We have no clear information on the issue of identical versus fraternal. Six sets were between 23 and 30 years old

and the seventh was 67 years old. In five sets, both twins are academic high achievers. In the sixth, the non-Phi Beta Kappa twin is a teacher. Only in the seventh set did the other twin not attend college. Among those twins who were elected to Phi Beta Kappa, we are finding the same traits and behavior as with single children.

Our research provided no evidence to support the notion postulating the depressed intelligence of twins, especially the smaller of the two. Lower weight twins had long been thought to be at developmental risk but more recent studies (Goleman, 1988) reported smaller twins catching up and even surpassing their larger siblings at the end of the first year. According to Tiffany Fields, whose findings are cited in this article, parents gave "enough compensatory attention" to the smaller children to redress any initial deficit. It is more than likely that the parents of AHAs, ever thoughtful about their children and their needs, attended to the special requirements of their twins in the same way as they did to their single children.

Perhaps the time has come to study large samples of multiple births beyond the early childhood years and to get facts and figures about average intelligence, dominance, and the effect of birth order on them. The prevalence today of a vastly increased number of multiple births offers a tantalizing field of research.

WHAT WAS LEARNED FROM THE BIRTH ORDER STUDIES

High Parental Expectations Matter More in Academic Success

As was stated earler, there is no reason to believe that birth order is unimportant in one's family life or self-esteem. However, with respect to academic achievement, birth order was not a factor in the academic success of the AHAs. When it came to academic achievement the parents of these AHAs must have transmitted the same message to *all* their children, regardless of birth order and regardless of gender.

The parents of the AHAs very likely had set standards and expectations with respect to learning and academic achievement and all the children—the oldest, the middle, and the youngest, as well as the only—were expected to do well academically. Indeed, the larger study provided the occasion to further examine the expectations set by the families of the AHAs. In speaking to

the older AHAs, they quite frequently referred to their parents expecting them, independent of age or gender, to succeed in school. These parents encouraged their children to learn their school subjects and to produce good grades in them.

"We were all encouraged to learn."

"My parents encouraged all the children to go on in school."

"Education was the route to success and the avenue to knowledge."

"My sister and I were expected to take school seriously."

It was the high expectations of their parents that was paramount in the academic success of these AHAs as well as their siblings. The parents gave all their children the opportunity for higher education. The educational achievement of the AHAs and their brothers and sisters clearly overrode considerations of birth order and gender.

When Dr. Leman's looked back in the *The Birth Order Book* (1985) at his own father's treatment of the children in his household, where he was the youngest of three, he says the following:

"Education became a major value that he communicated to all the children—even bear cub Kevin, who didn't show as much promise as the older children."

Well, how did the Leman children turn out? As expected, all of them did well academically and professionally. Dr. Leman's parents, like those of the AHAs, valued education and this message was conveyed to *all* the children.

Academic Achievers, Boys and Girls, are Treated Fairly

Most parents also boast of treating all their children fairly, although often they don't and many times they can't. Yet it is the intention of most parents to be fair. The word "fair" means "alike" to some, "equally" to others and "according to needs" to still others. I certainly support the last notion but it is the most difficult to fulfill. Some children need a great deal of attention while others are happy playing alone with compact disks or computers. Some need a good deal of physical activity while others need more rest.

It is interesting that the AHAs in this study almost without exception praised the fairness of the parents.

"My parents were not much on discipline for all of us."

"We all had to follow the same rules."

At least these AHAs were satisfied that they were treated fairly and even-handedly. The important thing is believing that you were treated fairly, and if parents can succeed at doing this their children's lives will be greatly enhanced.

The parents of these AHAs appreciated and valued learning and education and so they encouraged *all* their children to learn and do well in school. They offered their daughters, as well as their sons, the opportunity to earn a college degree. The exception to this rule was the one case cited earlier where only the son, and not any of his six sisters, was sent on to college. The ideal in rearing children is to treat all your children fairly and apparently the parents of the AHAs were able to do so.

For too long women have complained that their parents treated their brothers better than they, especially when it came to educational opportunities. It was the sons who were encouraged by both parents, especially their fathers, to move ahead both academically and professionally. On the other hand, fathers essentially nurtured the feminine side of their daughers, supporting the loving and caring parts of their personalities. Victoria Secunda, in her book *Women and Their Fathers* (1992), argued that fathers must assume another role as well with respect to their daughters—they must teach them to stand up and think for themselves, which is an essential prerequisite to the development of self-esteem. It is this self-esteem that will allow them to compete on the same level as their male counterparts in the academic and work arenas.

From the comments made by the AHAs, it did not appear that the fathers treated their daughters any differently from their sons when it came to learning how to think. The scholarly achievements of the female AHAs speak most eloquently to this fair treatment by their fathers. Fathers of AHA daughters were as concerned about their daughters fulfilling their intellectual abilities as they were about their sons, and could probably serve as models for the types of fathers Victoria Secunda wishes for.

Drawing on the large body of literature that has focused on this issue of low self-esteem in women by Carol Gilligan, Joan

Jacobs Brumberg, and Carol Tavris, Peggy Orenstein wondered whether parents set lower expectations for their female children they they do for their sons. In an attempt to answer this question and eager to learn more about the "confidence gap" between schoolboys and schoolgirls, Ms. Orenstein observed and interviewed young schoolgirls in the eighth grades of two coeducational schools in California and visited with some of their parents. Her undertaking resulted in her recently published book *Schoolgirls* (1994).

The young women she interviewed reported that they felt their parents favored their brothers, listened to them more attentively, and doled out greater rewards to them for their achievements. Such expressions made it easier to understand why these young women had lower self-esteem and self-confidence and why they so frequently lagged behind the boys academically. The girls raised their hands less often in class and participated less frequently than their male counterparts. The boys did not always know the right answers but still shouted out answers, eager to be active participants.

Ms. Orenstein reported sorrowfully that the parents of these adolescent girls weren't even aware of their daughters' reluctance to enter into class discussions, nor did they know how silently they sat in their classroom seats. What a contrast to the parents of the AHAs, who, on the whole, treated both their daughters and their sons fairly, who were aware of their abilities, and who encouraged daughters and sons alike to achieve to their fullest potential. The confidence and diligence common to all the AHAs, male and female, which was so important to their academic success stemmed from the fair treatment they received at home.

Whereas Ms. Orenstein can only look with profound sorrow at the girls she studied, I can look with pride at both the AHAs and the parents who guided their sons and their daughters along their successful paths.

On those occasions when one child was treated noticeably different from another, it was usually related to economics or such changes in the family structure as the death of a parent. In large, poor families the older children were sometimes denied the opportunity for continued education. Apparently the income from the older children supported the household.

"My parents, working class people, couldn't afford to send older sibs to college," reported Jane.

I have known a number of bright men whose families could not afford to send them to medical schools, so they became pharmacists or podiatrists. Equally I know of women with great intellectual promise who could not afford graduate school. They became elementary school teachers after normal school or college. The family's desire to educate all their children was very obvious but they often had to operate within stringent financial constraints. In these large families, when the family income was increased by an additional wage earner or two life became easier for the younger children, who went as far as they wished educationally.

Oldest, Middle, Youngest, and Twins—
All Can Achieve

In my opinion, no parent, educator, or counselor should be particularly concerned with birth order in considering a child's educational potential. Birth order does not appear to be the critical factor. Some of the old tales about birth order and the older literature might have been true in their time but now it does not matter if a child is an only, first, or fourth when we are speaking of educational aspirations. All birth order ranks can reach for the moon on the educational ladder.

What does matter are the early supportive family experiences. They are very important in rousing and developing scholastic ability. It appears that where education is a family value, the children are encouraged to get as much schooling as possible. They are also praised for doing well in school and their parents pay attention to what is being taught and, more importantly, what is being learned in school.

The birth order position of any child probably does not affect whether that child will take over the parent's business and, if the son or daughter do so, whether it will be run successfully. We don't even know if the son or daughter of a published, successful writer is likely to be a writer. However, in matters of business, as in education, the parents who can impart enthusiasm and skills are more likely to be emulated. Parents who want their children to follow their vocations should frequently and enthusiastically remark on the attendant benefits and satisfaction, as did the parents of AHAs when it came to education.

Birth Order Position Was Not a Problem for AHAs

Many of us have heard our friends and associates in different birth order positions talk about themselves in certain ways. Older children of either sex relate feeling a sense of extra responsibility, or at least they think that they are expected to feel that way. Many only children often go through life feeling quite special. If they are inclined to complain, they talk of loneliness. If inclined to brag, they mention the feeling of exclusivity. Middle children complain about their unimportance in the family constellation. Youngest children comment that they feel less bound to succeed than their siblings.

Oldest AHAs were not asked whether they assumed extra responsibility at home, nor were the youngest ones asked whether they received hand-me-down clothing. They did not express, in either their written comments or their phone interviews, any problems associated with their position in the family. Very often the above stated feelings that are expressed by the youngest, middle, and oldest children among our friends grew out of parental treatment that favored the child in one position over another in a different position. Since the AHAs in these studies so often commented on how fairly their parents treated all the children, the oldest ones probably did not feel that their parents overburdened them, the middle children did not feel that they were less important than the other siblings, and the younger ones probably had no reason to complain to us.

What About Birth Order and Choice of Profession for these AHAs?

Frank Sulloway (Stipp, 1994; Goleman; 1990), who now has a book in press on birth order and revolutionaries, based on his nearly quarter of a century of research of individuals who have shaped our history, is convinced that there is a relationship between birth order and personality factors such as open-mindedness, risk-taking, and caution. Dr. Sullaway believes that laterborns are more likely to be rebels who back revolutions whereas cautious firstborns tend to side with those already in power. Laterborns support scientific breakthroughs whereas firstborns are more hesitant to do so.

It would have been interesting to explore whether the chosen careers and professions of the AHAs followed the pattern predicted by Dr. Sulloway's theories. Would the laterborn AHAs be more likely to break new ground in their chosen professions? Would the firstborn AHAs be expected to plod on in their chosen fields, reluctant to change the status quo? Since the data were not analyzed in a way that could cast light on these questions, or on Dr. Sulloway's theories for that matter, I can only comment in a general way about his ideas from my impressions of the AHAs.

As a group the AHAs valued learning and knowledge. They were not afraid to explore new ideas, take challenging courses, or consider different thoughts and ideas. This included the oldest, the middle, and the youngest in birth order terms. I doubt very much that it was only the youngest of the AHAs who were the groundbreakers in their fields. To be scholarly is to question, to doubt, and to want to know. Their feelings about education and learning, discussed in the next chapter, were found to be far better predictors of whether or not they would be open to new ideas than their birth order rankings.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

In this large sample of AHAs, birth order did not relate to school success. High academic achievement ensued because it was expected and cultivated in their families. The fair treatment of these achievers, both male and female, by their parents also proved to be an essential factor in their academic performance. Not only did it influence their success in school but it also contributed immensely to producing individuals who led successful and fulfilling lives.

Ideally, children should be brought into the world because they are wanted and their parents believe that they can provide for them. If children are permitted to pursue their dreams, I believe that supportive early family experiences will be far more important in their development as productive and happy individuals than birth order, which in any event, cannot be controlled.

This could also be said with respect to the entire pool of genes with which each individual is endowed. The genes determining human characteristics are passed down at conception and for the most part can be neither altered nor controlled after

birth. What can be controlled to some extent, however, are the environments to which children are exposed. Although parents cannot control all the many environmental factors that will impinge on the child's life, they are largely responsible for furnishing the home environment. It is here that the parents can set the groundwork for the fullest ripening of their children's genetic potentials.

On a more personal note, I remember very well how my younger daughter, a teenager then, looked over my shoulder as the data on the birth order study were being analyzed. She remarked: "Mother, if you find the oldest children do the best in school, I'll be very upset." It was with great joy and relief that I informed her that we had found no birth order effect. However, knowing that in our home, where education was esteemed, she would have the opportunity to develop her potential fully, I also informed her with great confidence that she would advance nicely in school. Susan is now an attorney, as is her firstborn sister Robin.

3

Education: Related to Love of Learning

What makes the student who earns As (our AHAs) so different from the student who is doing poorly or is on the verge of failing? Throughout my years as a professor, I have met many students who were doing poorly or who eventually dropped out of college whom I believed had been born with the same potential as these high academic achievers. At one time in their educational careers, these students had been able to keep up with their schoolwork and perform at least adequately in class, if not better. Yet they could not and did not succeed at college. What stopped those students who had gained admission to college from walking out with their college diplomas? Why do some students who show promise in the lower grades never make it to college?

Native intelligence alone does not guarantee success in the classroom and cannot be the determining factor. More likely the difference between the academic achievers and those who failed to live up to their potential lay in a set of traits, principles, and beliefs that were acquired by the students who do well in school. These achievers bring to their studies an appropriate set of learning tools, which work in conjunction with whatever inherent talents they possess. The academic achievers have learned how to learn and succeed in the educational arena.

What are these tools? How were they procured? Is there a particular catalyst that can explain the proficiency of these academic achievers in their scholarly pursuits? Clues to what distinguished the AHAs from the failing students, as well as from the less efficient students who complete their coursework with

average passing grades, were gained from two questions that were posed to a large group of AHAs on academic achievement and life satisfaction and from a series of questions posed to the smaller older group of AHAs.

Questions about Academic Achievement, Learning, and Life Satisfaction

To my delight, responses to two questions on the relationship of academic achievement to life satisfaction in the second questionnaire to members of the New York Phi Beta Kappa Association gave me some insight into what distinguished these successful students from the less successful (Bronzaft & Hayes, 1983). Before I identify these factors, bear with me as we analyze the responses to these two questions.

One hundred subjects, 65 women and 35 men living in the New York metropolitan area, responded to two questions relating academic achievement to life satisfaction. The *first* question asked:

> *Reviewing your life, how would you appraise the relationship between academic achievement and life satisfaction?*

The members of the New York Association overwhelmingly stressed the role of learning in their lives, even though the question was not phrased in terms of learning but academic achievement. The respondents, especially the women, wrote lengthy, detailed responses. A few individuals even appended additional pages of personal biographical material. Working independently, my co-author and I made judgments as to whether the relationship between academic achievement and life satisfaction was positive or negative and then high, low, or moderate. Even we were surprised at how we agreed on these ratings and in the rare cases where we had some question, agreement was soon reached.

On the whole, the subjects believed in the relationship between academic achievement and life satisfaction. Sixty-three answered that the relationship was high and positive and 22 called it moderate and positive, while only ten said low and positive. Four responses were negative and one man did not answer.

Did men and women differ in their answers? Yes! Seventy-four percent of the men reported that academic achievement and life satisfaction were strongly related but only 57 percent

of the women answered this way. This difference undoubtedly reflects the difficulty women have had and still have translating their academic success into jobs and professions commensurate with their ability.

What better way to illustrate the striking effect their aca demic achievement had on life satisfaction than in the respondents' own words. Some quotes follow:

A. K. O., Female, 51, M.S., Psychiatrist

"Briefly, I believe my academic achievement has been the most important contributor to my life satisfaction of all in that it enabled me to become a professional person and contribute to life satisfaction of others.

Without academic achievement I would, perhaps, have been mired in unrewarding family conflicts and flattened by the social pressures that weighed so heavily on women of my generation. Scholastic recognition early on helped me to know I had the intellectual strength, at least to engage the world later."

S. F., Female, 25, B.A., Health Writer

"Academic achievement has been an important part of my life satisfaction. In early years it was part of the base of my self esteem. I knew I had abilities that could produce recognition in school and that was exciting. However, as time went on, I wished to make use of these abilities—to learn more, to achieve academically. Work later on was only part of the satisfaction of my adult life. The academic achievement was the fun part—insofar as learning (not the work part) is what is fun for me. I value the knowledge."

P. P., Female 38, M.A., Psychologist

"The glory of enjoying academic studies is that it prods you to do more—to search out another book by the same author, to view a production of a play you have read in class, to see an exhibit of artworks you have experienced only through reproductions. My academic experience has been and still is a very important ingredient in my life."

H. O. M., Male, 75, Ph.D., Professor

"In thinking back, I seem to summon up feelings of astonishment and delight. Astonishment that in view of my first year at Phillips Exeter, I had managed not only to survive but also to learn and appreciate the meaning of books, languages, and just the pure pleasure of study. Delight in having chosen teaching as a career, which in retirement I look back on as having given me so much pleasure."

S. A. K. Female, 53, Ph.D., Biologist

"My academic achievement has enhanced life satisfaction. It had a positive effect on my life, such as adding to my self-confidence, my feeling of dignity, my worth. Finally, and not least, it has deepened the realization of beauty, richness, multiplicity of life, which one can enjoy and take part in by putting in the effort required for academic achievement. Thus, to me academic achievement, by being a reward for effects that in themselves give satisfaction, opens doors to possibilities in life that otherwise would not be available."

V. S. S., Female, 66, Ph.D., Psychologist

"My academic achievement as an undergraduate and a graduate student has enriched my life. I have had a successful career as a scholar, author and teacher. I have received numerous honors including honorary degrees, election to Boards of Directors and to offices in professional organizations."

C. F., Male, 40, Systems Planner

"Academic achievement was rewarded more clearly than any other thing in my life. My credentials and knowledge helped me to obtain and perform in jobs in my field. They are assets in my social interaction with others and with society in general. Knowledge has assisted me in my daily life satisfaction by enabling me to understand, appreciate and enjoy culture and intellectual events of our time."

C. S., Female, 32, Accountant

"There is a direct relationship between academic achievement and life satisfaction in that I have credibility and unnecessary time is not wasted proving myself. Being used to excelling in the academic world carries over to the real world. I would do nothing different. I can honestly say my life satisfaction is at a maximum."

F. F., Female, 74, Professor

"If I would isolate the academic part of my life, I would say it has afforded me challenges and the need to grow and change which I consider important to my development. Also it is the one constant when other relationships change."

A *second* challenging question was also posed to the New York Association members. It read:

What would you do otherwise if you could?

Forty of the hundred said they would change *nothing or very little*. Thirty-four said they would change *some things if given*

the opportunity, and a surprising twenty-six said *they did not know*. My own interpretation of the *don't know* response is that it is very close to the first one—*nothing or very little*. This means that about three-fourths were generally content with their lives. This tends to refute the stereotype of the unhappy egghead.

The gender difference was there again, with 54 percent of the men and 32 percent of the women wishing *no* change while 40 percent of the women and 23 percent of the men preferred change. Again this may represent women's unhappiness about the lack of opportunity to fully realize their potential. A 62-year-old AHA was probably speaking for this group when she wrote:

> "Unfortunately, while a pioneer working mother with children, I was born too early to really profit from the increased opportunities available to women. Consequently, the conventional choice of vocation was teaching. Today, I would not urge my daughter to enter this field."

On the other hand, listen to the words of the AHAs who were content with the way their lives worked out:

> "If I had to do it all over again—as I have told countless former students—I would consider myself lucky indeed if I could do it the same way. (From a 73-year-old former dean.)
>
> "I think I would do nothing otherwise in my life since I have used academic achievement and hope still to develop my professional and personal life and reap the rewarding experiences they bring." (From a 53-year-old biologist.)
>
> "I would not change anything at all about the life I have led related to my academic training and the influence it had on me." (From a 51-year-old psychologist.)
>
> "At 66 I am very happy with my life and accomplishments I cannot think of anything that I would do otherwise if I could. (From a very happy psychology professor.)

Those who preferred some change expressed a strong interest in even more learning. They wrote of more schooling and more time to study and philosophize or to dabble further into creative arts. Let them speak for themselves.

> "Perhaps to devote more time to writing poetry," said a 72-year-old retired professor.

"I would take degrees in comparative linguistics and ancient languages," said a woman of 53.

"Continue with more graduate work," stated a 53-year-old teacher.

"I would gain more knowledge of the relationships between the different academic disciplines," answered a 37-year-old systems analyst.

"I would have pursued my doctorate," stated a 53-year-old physician.

In essence their few regrets show that they longed for more education and more scope. Essentially they all, one hundred percent, stated that they maintained their love of learning.

So what was the essential factor that differentiated the successful AHAs? *Love of learning was the catalyst, the impetus, the critical determinant, the driving force.*

LOVE OF LEARNING: THE BASIS OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

The 20 subjects with whom I spoke on the phone were asked how they felt about learning, about their parents' attitudes toward learning, and whether in their childhood homes learning was imparted as a lifelong value or as the path to vocational and financial success.

All 20 respondents, as if with a single voice, placed great value on learning. Only their words can express the high esteem in which learning is held and how deeply ingrained this love of learning is in their lives.

"Education is my life," said a 50-year-old rabbi, a happily married father of two. He went on to say, "scholarship serves a highly personal need. It gives you a sense of worth."

"Learning is the most important thing in my life," was the statement made by an 80-year-old woman and former dean.

"My mind to me a kingdom is." This was said by a 71-year-old widow and author.

"Learning is for learning's sake," responded a 62-year-old married woman and administrator.

"Learning is like breathing," is how a 73-year-old professor expressed his feelings.

The responses from these twenty personal phone calls are explicitly illustrative of the tremendous importance of learning in the lives of AHAs. They also reflect how learning has been integrated into the life style and value system of the academic achiever. It appears to be at the very core of their being.

WHEN AND HOW LOVE OF LEARNING AROSE

As one looks to the AHAs' responses and comments, love of learning clearly stands out as the key element in their academic achievement. They were not simply students who got high grades in school; they were students who loved to learn and acquire knowledge. If any one phrase could explain the success of these achievers it would be "love of learning." The foundation for the development of this love and respect for learning was laid very early in their lives and it endured for the rest of their lives.

In my opinion the source of love of learning lies in normal childhood curiosity. The infant explores the crib, stares at the walls and ceiling, touches the nursing mother, sucks toys and pacifiers, and feels the prickly hairs of the father's chin. Under normal circumstances, most babies get this far. By the second half of the first year, the baby needs more than minimal exploratory opportunities. Curiosity can now be nurtured or stifled. The child who is encouraged to explore, examine, and investigate will be on the path to developing a love of learning.

These quotes from the AHAs reflect this encouragement to explore and examine:

> "Father said we learn by doing," said 62-year-old Betty.
>
> "Surround your children with books and allow them to explore," stated 68-year-old Richard.
>
> "Children must explore on their own; must learn from doing. Parents need to stimulate children to search out on their own. Family must be there to support them," explained 63-year-old Frances.

All children are naturally curious. They explore their surroundings using their five senses of sound, sight, touch, taste, and smell. If there is nothing to explore, they give up and sink into their own private worlds. Curiosity engenders learning. Peo-

ple who look forward to learning enjoy the opportunity to learn and will develop a love of learning, and, given a few other conditions, including love and encouragement, can become AHAs.

Perhaps the noticeable lack of intellectual curiosity today is partly a side effect of the instant gratification of any urge to stimulation by television. The child might be wondering about the shape of the clouds seen from a window or the odd shapes on the livingroom wallpaper but when the mother, sitter, or older child turns on the television set, these spurts of curiosity are put aside and the television images take over.

I have met many teenagers who have *never* opened an atlas, used a timetable or a large unabridged dictionary, considered the differences in available bank interests, compared costs per ounce in the supermarket, or shown any similar behaviors, which are common to AHAs. When chided for their lack of curiosity, they simply reply that they are not interested. It is apparent that they came from homes, regardless of economic level or educational achievement of parents, where they were not stimulated to question, explore, and investigate.

Learning is Rooted in Curiosity

The older literature on child development had stressed the importance of the bond between mother and child during the second half of the first year. Rene Spitz (1949) reported that institutionalized children, deprived of their mothers at this time, became socially withdrawn and slowed down in their physical growth. Studies by Goldfarb (1945) and Bowlby (1951) confirmed Spitz' findings of the devastating effect of "maternal deprivation" and went even further by stating that such deprivation might permanently impair the child intellectually and emotionally, even to the point of death.

However, other researchers criticized these studies, casting doubt on their conclusions. One such researcher, Lawrence Casler (1961), believed that the cause of the child's retardation was lack of stimulation in the surroundings rather than absence of maternal love. The children were not being stimulated in institutional settings. Their curiosity was almost completely unrewarded. In his child psychology text, Wallace Kennedy (1975) summed up the impact of the above studies as follows: "Without maternal love and cuddling as a model in infancy, man never is able to love; without stimulation and opportunity for concept training, man never is able to learn" (p. 134).

There are many influences in a young child's life. *Everything* influences children's lives, including where they live, how many siblings they have, their living quarters, finances, weather, neighbors, playmates, social class or caste, religion, temperament, and health. However, when it comes to the development of learning, I am convinced that its predecessor is *rewarded* curiosity. It is natural and desirable for tots and toddlers to explore the environment and make their very own discoveries but such explorations need support from the adults surrounding these children.

Most households can provide a world of things for exploration at the time a baby sits, crawls, creeps, and finally walks. It is important for parents to remove dangerous objects and see to it that stairs are blocked and windows guarded but encouragement of movement and freedom of motion should be guiding goals. Eager to protect children when they are scooting around on all fours, parents often confine them to playpens. Playpens do give parents greater peace of mind, and some rest as well, but they should not become jails for children. Playpens can contain many objects-large balls, soft blocks, touch and tell toys—which provide fun, enjoyment and learning for the child. The soft blocks and balls, which are often thrown out of the playpen, allow the baby to learn the consequence of throwing objects—another good learning experience.

Children should have access to toys, and these toys need not be expensive. Pots and lids are fine, and passed-down toys are too. The purpose of these items, for some of them actually are not toys, is to stimulate children's interest in things, and to help them learn what these things do or what can be done with them. My daughter loved playing with small blocks, pots, lids and food cans. Piling up and balancing these objects, one upon the other, kept her occupied for long periods of time. I was delighted to learn recently from Dr. Otto Raths, a professor of physics in New York City, that piling simple objects later can help children grasp the basic principles of physics.

I confess to being a people-watcher. I love to sit on park benches observing both children and parents and children and their babysitters in Central Park in New York City. The park abounds with trees, rocks, pigeons, people, small lakes or bodies of water, benches, statues, signs, pets, and skaters—even horse-drawn carriages and occasionally a few riders mounted on horses. The wise parent or caretaker watches the child very carefully and permits exploration including touching, saving the

potent word "no" for behaviors that may damage the child or the environment. Parents and caretakers should not try to stop a child who tries to climb a few steps. If the child fails, she should be permitted to continue until she gives up or succeeds. Success often rates a few quiet words—"That was fine, Melanie."

Today many children are left with babysitters who only offer custodial care in unstimulating environments. Such children are missing out on the opportunity to develop curiosity and to learn to accept failure and enjoy praised success. If children are at least permitted to do the things that are appropriate for their age, they will utilize their curiosity and make discoveries which foster further curiosity, eventually leading to well motivated patterns of learning.

Parents must instruct their sitters to do more than sit and they must carefully select day care centers that offer stimulating settings for the children left in their care. Parents and sitters need to be reminded that children will fall down or poke into places that might be a bit dangerous in their explorations. Such occasions should not be viewed with alarm. Rather, caretakers should understand that new undertakings always carry a bit of risk, and they should be there to protect the children from real dangers. Caution and protection do not mean restraint. One of the AHAs gave the following advice with which I tend to concur:

> My children tended to fall more often when I was watching them, though these were not serious falls. My babysitter was fearful of allowing them to move around on their own but I permitted them to take more chances. I didn't want to rear my children in a way that would make them fearful or anxious to do new things. A child who creeps is going to bump into things but I noticed that the child quickly learns to be cautious. Learning always involves some risk-taking since we don't know ahead of time what we will be discovering.

Learning Through Observation

During infancy and early childhood, these same little explorers are, of course, seeing the people around them, especially their parents, and learning through careful observation. They notice what adults do and imitate much of what they see. They observe whether their parents read or watch television during leisure hours and they notice whether they smoke, drink,

argue, or discuss. Youngsters record their parents' activities and these influence their lives.

"If you read, child will read," advised one of the AHAs, underscoring how children acquire the desire to read. In fact, many of the statements the AHAs used to describe their home environment centered on books and reading. Their parents read and they, in turn, encouraged their children to read and learn. In those homes where money was scarce and books few in number, the children went to local libraries, often accompanied by their parents.

If parents read, then children will develop the reading habit and this indeed is what happened in the homes of the AHAs.

> "All my early days, we were surrounded by books," reported Edward. "We were a book family."
>
> "One of my earliest memories is going to the library to take out the maximum number of books allowed at one time. I can still see the street the library was located on and remember the big road I had to cross," said another AHA.
>
> Betty remembers her many trips to the library where her mother took out books—eventually she did the same. "My mother was always surrounded by books."
>
> "My parents set the example, then I for my children. My advice to parents is to set the example and this will influence the children to read." These were the words of Marion, who is still a prolific reader.
>
> "My earliest memories involve books; they were all over the house. Both parents read every day. They read to us until we learned to read."

Searching for a word to describe the place of reading in the lives of the AHAs proved to be a formidable task that was finally solved when I interviewed Martha. She coined a perfectly wonderful word to describe how AHAs feel about reading.

> "I am a readerholic," Martha proudly stated.

The AHAs also believed that television distracted from reading. Readers must be reminded that the ages of the subjects in these studies ranged from twenty to ninety and more than a thousand were over the age of fifty. Thus, the formative years of most of our respondents did not take place in a world dominated by television. Following are some of their comments.

"Teach them to read and look at television less."

"Give up TV and read a book."

"Tell your children for every hour of TV they are to read four books."

"Grandchildren watch television but after homework is one."

That Phi Beta Kappas turn to books for their enjoyment, not television, was also accented in a story by Buffalo Bills coach Marvin Levy in the Phi Beta Kappa *Key Reporter* (1994). But first, a little bit more on the life of Buffalo Bills football coach Levy who received his Phi Beta Kappa key from Coe College in Iowa. Although he always wanted to become a football coach, he still went on for a master's degree at Harvard. He then braved telling his father of his career plans in a telephone call from Harvard. After a long pause, his father coupled his surprise with these encouraging words: "Be a good one!" These same words were echoed by so many of the parents of the AHAs, although few were spurring their children on to coaching careers. Marvin Levy didn't disappoint his father and has performed outstandingly in his career as a football coach. He has led his team to the Super Bowl for a record-breaking four years in a row.

Mr. Levy, when asked whether his career choice deprived him of "intellectual nourishment," responded as so many of the AHAs had in their interviews:

"Despite the technological avalanche of innovative electronic distractions, there are still books, and I remain an ardent reader. Among my favorite authors are Charles Dickens, Leon Uris, Thomas Wolfe and Herman Wouk."

We don't know if Marvin Levy's love of books started in the home—and we can only guess at that—but what we do know is that reading was and still is a mainstay in his life.

In an article on education, David Singal (1992) was struck by how few good books students are required to read in the elementary and high school classes during the school year. This should not be surprising in that watching television has replaced reading books for many members of our society, for older citizens as well as younger. This stands in sharp contrast to the preferences of the individuals in these studies for whom reading was and is still a major form of entertainment and pleasure.

My contribution to the debate on the value of television comes from my own experience as a parent, teacher, and tele-

vision watcher. The shows most praised and watched by children feature daring, adventure, and seemingly impossible feats and fantasy, much the same as the favored books of an older generation. Good programs, like good books, could be both educational and enjoyable. However, have we reckoned with television as an educational tool and force?

The American Psychological Association in its testimony before the Federal Communications Commission in June 1994 (Wiggins, 1994) remarked on the "dearth of educational television for children" and concluded that little has been done to improve educational television in the last twenty years. The APA further argued that as long as commercial television is unregulated, little effort will be made to correct the present situation.

In today's world television offers parents some respite and many seize it and encourage its use or overuse. Personally, as an "old timer" in some respects, I concur with the assessment of the AHAs and the American Psychological Association, and would suggest limiting television watching, computer games, and many activities that take away from reading time. This suggestion is for both parents and children.

Observing parents reading newspapers can also encourage this daily habit. The daily reading habits make a real difference in the move from curiosity to being knowledgeable. Good reading habits, which include learning about what's happening in the world about us, are closely tied to learning and achievement. For this reason I would recommend the good newspapers that give ample space to world news, the latest issues, editorials, the environment, and scientific progress. The parents who read the nightly tabloid with its emphasis on mass entertainment, gossip, personals, and sensational stories is giving children a not-very-subtle message about what is important and they, like their children, are missing the educational value of a good newspaper.

Reading played and still plays an important part in the life of the AHAs and their reading habits are entwined with their learning skills and life achievements. Should reading of books play as prominent a role in the education of today's youngsters as it did at the time the AHAs were growing up? Are my ideas, with which my fellow AHAs would agree, that parents should continue to place great emphasis on the reading of books, that these books need not be expensive, that the classics such as *Little Women*, *The Little Princess*, and *Black Beauty* can still be appreciated, and that reading stories to young children is an

activity that fosters family closeness and encourages early and later reading still relevant in an era where television, movies and computers have taken central stage? It was especially gratifying and reinforcing to read an article entitled *The Reading Wars* by Barbara Kantrowitz, which was so much in agreement with my thoughts about the importance of reading. This article was contained in a special issue of *Newsweek* (1990) devoted entirely to education. Ms. Kantrowitz appears to place the same value on reading books that our AHAs did and urges parents to spend time reading to their children. She concludes by saying that: "After a while, reading together gets to be a habit that no one wants to give up." She could have added, as we learned from the AHAs, that reading in itself becomes a lifelong habit.

Love of Learning Starts in the Home

Most of these academic achievers, especially the older ones, came from stable, conventional homes, where parents respected and esteemed learning and education. Their parents praised them when they brought home good grades.

Many of the AHAs referred to their parents as being strict about their education. Strictness apparently meant expectations that their children would meet very high but attainable standards in school. The parents of these AHAs had definite kinds of goals they wished for their children and they expressed much confidence in the outcomes. They clearly stated that learning and doing well in school was important. Subsequently, the AHAs also guided their children with loving hands along the same path of learning. Here are some quotes:

George, 57 years old: "My parents did all they could to encourage us to go to school. They got their message across."

Marian, 71 years old: "Books were everywhere. We were expected to read and encouraged to solve problems. My parents felt education was the most important thing. My sister and I had to go to college. Love of learning should be passed on to kids."

Edward, 76 years old: "We lived in an academic atmosphere. We couldn't escape it."

Norman, 63 years old: "Education was extremely important to my parents. There was no question about going on. All of us did well in school."

All the AHAs interviewed spoke of two parents—mother and father—being present in their households when they were growing up and none mentioned divorce. The presence of two parents in the homes of children growing up today is certainly less typical than in the time the AHAs were growing up, especially the AHAs over the age of fifty. In light of the body of literature demonstrating the negative impact of parental divorce and single-parent homes on children's academic achievement (Bisnaire, Firestone, & Rynard, 1990), the two-parent homes of the AHAs certainly worked to their advantage with respect to their academic achievement. Bisnaire and colleagues, however, do provide some hope for the great number of youngsters growing up in single-parent homes today. When both parents spent significant amounts of time with their children after the separation, their performance levels were maintained several years after the parents separated.

The more germane issue that needs to be addressed, independent of whether children are living in two-parent or single-parent homes, is whether these children are being taught to take their schoolwork seriously and to develop the appropriate work habits in school, as were the AHAs when they were growing up. When children bring the right attitudes and habits to their schoolwork, then in time they will come to appreciate learning for itself. This is how the love of learning is cultivated.

The parents of Asian students who have been recognized as the primary force behind their children's excellent performance in school would certainly compare most favorably with the parents of these AHAs when it comes to academic discipline (d'Ailly, 1992; Stevenson, Stigler, Lee, & Lucker, 1985). Two quotes sharply describe the influence of these Asian parents:

> Behind almost every high-scoring student in Japan's competitive school system is a mother whose efforts are superhuman. (Simons, 1987)

> If you don't study, you will never become anything. If you study, you will become what you wish. (Butterfield; 1990)

Another very appropriate description of these Asian parents appears in the d'Ailly (1992) article, in which he explores several possible explanations for Asian mathematic superiority: "The most prevalent conception people have about Asian parents is probably their high expectation of their children."

What about the American parents? Turning to the American

counterparts of these Asian parents, d'Ailly says the following: "[They] expected less and helped their children less with their homework."

That American parents set lower standards for their children and are satisfied with their overall performance, rather than asking their children to do better, was also commented on by Stevenson, Lee, Chen, Stigler, Fan, & Ge (1990) in their study contrasting children in China with a comparable sample in the United States.

d'Ailly and Stevenson cannot be speaking of all American parents because I am confident that there are many parents today who oversee school assignments and carefully monitor their children's academic progress. So, much like the parents of the AHAs, they emphatically and overtly expect a great deal from their children academically and are certainly there to assist them with whatever they need, including homework. Readers should not interpret such parental behavior as an exertion of excessive pressure on their children to excel, as some have accused the Japanese parents of doing, possibly to the point of not allowing their children to develop their own individuality and other personal strengths. Neither the descriptions of the ways AHA parents guided their childen's education nor my observations of the families around me who care about their children's schooling reflect any hint of tension, pressure or stress.

Now, what about those individuals who do fit the d'Ailly and Stevenson et al. description of the less than conscientious parents; many of them parents from middle-class homes who for a myriad of reasons have let their concern for their children's education slip? To the readers of this book who were raised in homes where their parents behaved as did those of the AHAs, and who have let their economic and social obligations consume an inordinate amount of their time, I say reflect on your present behavior and try to return to nurturing your child via the traditional ways with which you were reared; when parents and children read side by side, where homework was checked and report card grades, if poor, were questioned, and if good, praised.

However, there are unfortunately those parents who are not involved with their children's schoolwork because they feel estranged from the educational system. Individuals from low-income homes, many of them minority, who have had bad experiences with the school system when they were younger, and who often have dropped out themselves, are intimidated by educators and administrators and reluctant to be involved with their

children's education. It goes without saying that these children are not getting the assistance at home that was so common in the homes of the AHAs.

A Yale University psychiatrist, James P. Comer, understood the importance of family support in academic achievement and attempted to reach out to these low-income families and involve them in their children's learning experiences (Marriott, 1990). He focused on bringing parents and teachers together on a regular basis, forcing parents to participate in the school life of their children. In the process, he hoped that their fears and discomfort would abate. In some cases, where parents weren't available, uncles and grandmothers became the family member participants. Dr. Comer understands fully how crucial the parents are in building a child's confidence. In those schools that have implemented Dr. Comer's program, a rise in self-confidence has resulted in better school attendance and improved grades. Dr. Comer's program, like others introduced over the past forty years starting with Higher Horizons, an educational enrichment enterprise in the New York City public schools in the 1950's, is based on the premise that proper parental encouragement is a critical factor in the prediction of academic performance.

Readers should also be alerted to the fact that not all the parents of the AHAs were excellent students who had received good educations. There were AHAs who informed me that their parents did not have the opportunity for formal schooling. Yet the same high respect for education was expressed by both groups of parents—those who were fortunate enough to have gone on to college and those who were mainly self-taught; doing much reading and learning on their own initiative.

Edward, 76 years old had added this information about his family: "Father did not go to college but sent his brother."

Emphatically, the AHA developed the desire to learn and achieve in the home. Positive self-esteem soon followed when their accomplishments in the classroom brought them praise and positive reinforcement from both their parents and their teachers. Bolstered by this self-esteem, these AHAs learned to apply themselves to their academic studies and academic excellence ensued. In time their academic knowledge acquired merit and value for its own sake. However, this awareness of the worth of knowledge in its own right proceeds gradually and consistently and needs to be helped along by parental appreciation. Children need the help and support of their parents and family that the AHAs had in abundance.

Love of Learning Was a Family Tradition in the AHAs' Homes

From my telephone conversations and the written comments of the AHAs, I learned that their parents gave them an appreciation of learning and they in turn transmitted this to their children and grandchildren. It appears to me that these are precious threads on a tapestry that is treasured and used throughout the generations.

> "My sister and I had to go to school, three of my children completed college and my fourth is at Harvard. It never occurred to my children to do otherwise and they are passing this on to their children," said a 71-year-old AHA.
>
> "My mother and father always stressed education. My grandparents sent my parents away to school. My children have gone on to college and I have four grandchildren who have graduated from college. The fifth and youngest is still in school," reported a 76-year-old AHA.
>
> "Both of my daughters are Phi Beta Kappa and all my grandchildren graduated from college," responded an older AHA artist. "On both sides of my family, there appears to be a tradition of some learning stretching back for centuries, and so there may be both an environmentally caused and a hereditary interest of a kind which led to academic achievement."

Adventure and Risk-taking Contribute to Love of Learning

Risk taking and adventure also had a place in the homes of these AHAs. However, for the AHA, risk-taking and adventure involved reading a difficult book, solving a challenging problem or studying a new language. "It was exciting to solve problems," remembered 62-year-old Betty.

Our present day, fast-paced society often associates risk-taking with high speed racing, drugs, kinky sex, gambling and get-rich-quick schemes. This view sharply contrasts with the kinds of activities described by the older AHAs. To them excitement and risk came from starting a new business or undertaking a new project after retirement. These adventures held unknown outcomes, along with fear and hope.

Using a summer vacation to go on an expedition or encouraging your child to perform community service in an unfamiliar

environment can provide risk and daring for young people. By testing themselves out in these less-than-familiar surroundings, children can gain valuable experiences that contribute to love of learning. If results are bad, we learn about limits and failure and we have the opportunity to try out alternative ideas. But when results are good, we know what works and how sweet success is.

The home itself can serve as a place of adventure and new undertakings. One of the AHAs remembered how exciting it was to bake homemade cookies. Sometimes she didn't have all the called-for ingredients and so she would have to come up with substitutes. Water might have to take the place of milk; if there were no chocolate bits, raisins would have to do. When these cookies were served at dinner to the tune of family praise, the AHA experienced the pleasure of successful experimentation.

The experiences of many of our AHAs in the kitchen or in the tool shed are very different from those of children who are sent to special classes where all the necessary ingredients for cooking or materials for construction are neatly laid out. There is little opportunity in such classes to experiment or search out new ways of doing things. These programmed classes for very young children may not give these children the opportunities for spontaneity, innovation and imagination—all very essential to the development of the kind of learning that engenders the successful AHA.

We must remember that learning is not simply limited to the classroom. Many of us can remember the sheer joy we felt when we set up our first business venture—the lemonade and cookies stand near our home. The spontaneity that gave rise to this venture, linked with the self-motivation that inspired it, are elements injoyous learning that are retained and available when needed. Such learning experiences also allow for the development of skills that can contribute to the solution of problems, both in the classroom and in daily life. The home and the community abound with valuable experiences that can contribute to learning, and our children should let their imaginations roam over all the existing possibilities.

Love of Learning May Be Delayed—
It Can Withstand Setbacks

It should be understood that children who get good grades do require some fundamental natural ability but most children have this. In my many years as a teacher, I had students in my classes who were slower and apparently less well endowed but

still achieved. These students plodded away and as a result did extremely well while others who apparently were better endowed failed. Eventually these students appreciated the value of learning and worked extra hard to achieve their goals.

There are still others who do not grind away but simply seem to bloom all of a sudden. This can happen to a student who suddenly find herself in a classroom with a teacher who cares about her or appreciates her special way of doing things. Parents have to understand that some students may be delayed in their academic studies because they are physically challenged or somewhat clumsy at first but then they catch up to the others and start doing better in their classwork. Parents and teachers should not hold up late bloomers to ridicule but rather support and encourage them as they progress at their own pace. it is never too late to acquire a love of learning.

There were also AHAs who dropped out of school for reasons of illness, finances, or peer, parental, or other pressure. However, apparently enough positive internal feelings had built up during their formative years to persuade them to return to school. Let us look at two of these cases among the AHAs interviewed.

Leslie L. had been an excellent student in a secondary school for gifted girls. When she graduated she was 16 years old and it was 1932—the middle of the Depression—and she felt too young to obtain one of few jobs available. Positions for young people, whether full or part time, were indeed few and far between. She remained in high school for an additional post-graduate semester, taking a full program of courses and attending a commercial business school in the evening. She then found a routine clerical job, started college in the evening, met and married a poor boy, and dropped out of college at the end of the first semester.

When her two children were four and nine years old, she returned to college, taking a full program. During her first college semesters she did not elect classes held in the late afternoon. When the children returned from school she was with them because she could not afford babysitters. Classes that ran later were only included in her last few semesters when the children were older and sitters more affordable because her family income had increased slightly. With all the difficulties of arranging the college classes around her responsibilities as a wife and mother, Leslie completed college magna cum laude in three and a half years, was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, and became one of our AHAs as well as a college professor.

William C. entered high school in 1992, when he was twelve years old but his father's loss of employment and his own respiratory illness caused him to drop out of high school. After being in the workplace for fifteen years William was encouraged by his employer and a friend to return to high school, where he completed his school education. The sponsors went on to subsidize half of William's college expenses and William assumed the other fifty percent. He earned his college degree and a Phi Beta Kappa key, and then went on to graduate school where he earned his doctorate. Despite some academic setbacks, William enjoyed a career as a successful college professor.

Some of the children of the AHAs also took an hiatus from their formal educational training. Despite all the appropriate encouragement from their parents, they decided to drop out and do things that were less academic. In time, though, many of them returned to complete their education. Betty W, one of our AHAs, raised her children during the 1960's when young people sought alternative lifestyles. Her oldest daughter was involved in the protests common to that time period, dropped out of school for awhile, but then returned to school to get her degree. Betty's second son left school after a semester to travel around the world but then returned to college where he is on his way to a degree.

When learning is instilled during childhood and adolescence, individuals can withstand temporary setbacks in their educational careers. When parents have reared children with a love of learning, it can be expected that these children will seek out educational opportunities later.

Love of Learning is Reinforced in an Enriched School Environment

When I look back at my memories of my elementary school years the names of many of my teachers stand out clearly and I have particularly fond feelings toward those who were especially encouraging to me in my studies. In conversations over the years with my Phi Beta Kappa friends and colleagues, as well as some of my students, I found that they too remembered the names of favorite teachers in the early grades and also referred to the fact that these teachers expected them to do well in their studies.

In the telephone conversation with the AHAs, they too frequently mentioned their teachers as assuming important roles in

their educational lives. These teachers made them feel proud and worthwhile with supportive and kind words. Their comments, as well as my own experience with my teachers, as a teacher myself, and from my association with many colleagues, tell me that teachers can indeed influence students' lives. Good teachers augment and secure the love of learning established in the home.

The experiences that S. M., a thirty-year-old writer, had with her teachers also speaks to her own personal thirst for learning:

> "The primary satisfaction from my academic achievements have been the new worlds opened up to me through the books and teachers who have been part of my education. And I can say I have had the privilege of having had very individualized attention from my teachers, because of my constant desire for *more* of the learning experience, more of the peek between pages."

Here are some other AHA recollections about their teachers:

> "Most of my teachers cared for me, starting as early as first grade."
>
> "My second grade teacher, Ms. Birnbaum, took a great interest in my education."
>
> "My high school Latin teacher put my name in for a college scholarship."
>
> "My junior high school teachers, Mr. Feingold and Ms. Rosner, inspired me to seek a career as an English high school teacher."
>
> "My English high school teacher influenced me."
>
> "My high school Latin teacher taught me never to disavow intelligence."

An especially warm memory from a 73-year-old Californian woman:

> "I was blessed to know a beautiful, loving French teacher in high school. She was deeply loved by all her students. She inspired us and showed us the stars. I truly feel I owe everything to this one beautiful, caring, charismatic individual. When I achieved a high grade on my graduate language exam, 25 years after high school, I called her to thank her. The achievement belonged to her, not to me."

Let us now look more closely at the teachers of our AHAs; remembering that many of these AHAs were over the age of fifty.

They reported that their teachers were willing to spend time and effort with promising students on a one-to-one basis. Their teachers were usually available before or after class to answer questions that the student hesitated to ask in class or that were inappropriate for class.

Such teachers offered effective educational guidance at times when guidance counselors were either less experienced or not available. Because these teachers knew their students, they were able to offer a good mix of praise, guidance, and encouragement on an individual basis. Many of them had been excellent students themselves and desired to bring out the best in their students.

A heartrending story in which a Black woman speaks about her teachers in the segregated Colored School she attended in the 1940s (Gallagher, 1989) was so reminiscent of the way the AHAs described their dedicated teachers. Ms. Crawford, the subject of the story, recalls: "I don't think my education was inferior. The facilities were inferior. I firmly remember the concern and caring, the nurturing I received from teachers." The author of the article, Colleen Gallagher, then adds: "As Crawford's first grade teacher, McCoy fostered a life-long love of learning, as did many of her other teachers."

Students who are truly learning in our school system today have teachers who expect them to accumulate knowledge, not merely good grades, as did the teachers of the AHAs. However, it is widely known that many of our smarter students are not being challenged by the school system. They may be doing well when it comes to grades but these students are not acquiring a love of learning. They could if teachers expected more of them.

I am reminded of one of my younger daughter's elementary school teachers who embodied the type of teacher fearful of expanding his students' knowledge. He refused to assign the long-recognized classic books because he didn't believe his students could be aroused by "ancient" characters who spoke in polysyllabic words. Rather, he favored the more "popular" fiction, filled with characters whose utterances consisted primarily of "uhs" and "ehs." There was little I could do to convince him otherwise and could only bewail the many lost opportunities for those students who attend his classes.

David Singal, a professor of history, also believes our students are not expected to excel and even our "brightest students are getting a dumbed-down education" (1992). Professor Singal, citing the fact that only 7 percent of U.S. high school

students score above 600 on the SATs now, whereas in 1972 over 11 percent did, argues that educators now pay less attention to the gifted students. (The median for the SAT scores has been raised and placed at 500 recently, but the percentages of those achieving the highest scores within the new system should still be less than the comparable group in the 1970s to which Dr. Singal is referring.) He further goes on to say that the programs are paying more attention to low achievers and educators are more concerned with producing "equality rather than excellence." He urges moving toward "social equality and academic excellence."

Professor Singal also believes that most public schools are afraid of stretching students for fear of stressing them. He supports this statement by noting how many fewer books students are required to read. Citing the fact that for the past ten years the average verbal SAT score of people going into teaching has been around 400, he comments that students are not being exposed to capable teachers. This average was below the median for all students taking the test.

Professor Singal is not alone in his belief that American students aren't being properly motivated to aspire to higher standards. Quite the opposite—the typical American curricula demand less of their students than is expected of students in foreign countries. Support for such assumptions comes from a United States Department of Education report entitled "National Excellence: a Case for Developing America's Talent" (Richardson, 1993), which found that students in American classrooms are indeed learning less than their counterparts in other countries. Textbooks are easier than they used to be and few of these books are directed to the above-average student. By watering down the material presented rather than introducing "rigorous and complex material, some very talented youngsters are being denied the opportunity to reach their potential." This is especially true if they are poor and minority because those students have less access to educational opportunities outside the academic setting.

Dr. Leon Lederman, an award-winning physicist, in addressing the Phi Beta Kappa Society in October 1991, stated:

> The American educational establishment is still strongly constrained by the belief that the children are unwilling to learn and incapable of mastering the essentials of difficult subjects. We need to elevate our appreciation for achievements in learning and

thinking at least to the level of our appreciation for achievements in athletics and entertainment.

I strongly support the views of both Dr. Singal and Dr. Lederman. Many of our schools, especially those in large urban areas, would get failing grades if the caliber of the education offered were being judged and evaluated. Our educational system certainly deserves the poor press it has been receiving. Yet if we were to look at our schools from an historic perspective, we would find that there are many things to admire about a system founded on the proposition that all this nation's citizens are entitled to a free education. The basic tenets of our American educational system, which favors the asking of questions by pupils, dislikes very large classes, and applauds creativity and individualism, are essentially very sound. Furthermore, a good portion of the genius of the American system has been its ability to adapt to the changing needs of our waves of immigrants.

However, under the pressures of financial deficits the classes have grown large and the difficulties of recruiting well-trained teachers have resulted in the lowering of teacher standards. The kind of elementary or high school teacher that many of our AHAs remembered and that Ms. Crawford so fondly recalled is found less frequently. Burdened with more discipline problems and more clerical work, teachers have less time to devote to those students with inquiring minds. Also, fifty years ago there were many careers that were unavailable to women and teaching was one of their few respected options. Then, excellent female college students went into teaching.

Fewer of these outstanding students are being drawn into teaching today. Borrowing from Dr. Lederman, we might conjecture that we would attract educators of quality, both men and women, if good teachers were respected and appropriately rewarded for their skills. Moving in this direction was the introduction of a national teaching certificate to be awarded to teachers who successfully pass a series of subject-matter tests and who demonstrate in other ways their outstanding teaching skills. Presently teachers are licensed at the state and local levels but with this new certificate teachers would be able to teach in any of the fifty states. It is hoped that states would compete for these master teachers by offering them higher salaries.

Eighty-one gifted teachers were the first recipients of this national certificate and they were honored at a ceremony in Washington, D. C. in January 1995. A *New York Times* editorial (Jan-

uary 7, 1995) stated that the idea of the certificate was one way to "raise standards for teachers and elevate their status, treating them more like doctors and other professionals" (p.22). Attracting excellent students to teaching by offering incentives through the national licensing system falls short of Dr. Lederman's goal of elevating our appreciation for education to the level enjoyed by the fields of entertainment and athletics, but it still should result in a dramatic upturn in the quality of our teachers and our educational system.

AHAs Are Persuaded Not Pressured to Learn

Adults talk and observe and constantly make comparisons. If Johnny learns to walk before his little neighbor Susie, then Susie's mother is disturbed. However, the fact that Susie talks before Johnny equally disturbs Johnny's mother. Parents often handle the so-called "slowness" of their children's development by pushing via classes, tutors, and so on. Such parents often make their children feel inadequate and they carry these feelings into adulthood. Parents should be reminded that children develop at different rates and if they are left alone most children catch up.

Today, especially in two-salaried upper-middle-class families, there is a great desire to produce super babies. From Janet Elder's *New York Times* article on this subject, "The Super Baby Burnout Syndrome" (1989), I quote:

> Middle-class upwardly-mobile parents are ignoring the dictates of child development and embracing the popular notion that 'the sooner a child learns something the better off that child will be.' For many children, the joys of an unencumbered childhood have been sacrificed to the demand for performance their parents place on them, however subtle. (p. 30)

This article is rightly concerned with the numerous classes to which little children are exposed or subjected. I thoroughly agree with Elder's unhappiness that "often parents see play as a waste of time." The net result of overprogramming may well be burnout. Working parents do have to make provisions for children and some will send their children to nursery schools. This is not the issue behind the "burnout syndrome." It is the conscious and competitive desire of the parent to produce superkids via overprogramming. This is an inappropriate pressure.

An adult stressed by working several jobs, bringing up children, caring for older parents, and having other tasks as well soon begins to realize how stressful life has become. If the pressures are unchecked, she may become the victim of mental breakdown. Similarly we must recognize that childhood burnout may be analogous to the adult nervous breakdown and parents must be warned about placing their children in the type of situation that might lead to burnout.

In these days, when even parents are on strict schedules—going to exercise or to of a multitude of classes—they are not giving themselves the opportunity to rest or reflect. Similarly the children, as they are bundled up and taken from one activity to the next, are not being given the time to rest or nap when needed, rather than when scheduled. Children are not being given the time to reflect at their own pace, rest at unscheduled times, and digest the lessons to which they have been exposed. Effective learning requires such contemplation and periods of rest between learning sessions.

Glenn Doman of The Institutes for the Achievement of Human Potential in Philadelphia (personal communication, September 1989) has established a school to teach parents to make "their perfectly well kids even weller" and to assist these parents in pushing their children's intellectual ability to their fullest potential. The institute has also published a series of books, including *How to Teach Your Baby to Read*, *How to Multiply Your Baby's Intelligence*, and *How to Teach Your Baby Math*, in twenty different languages. Millions of parents have enthusiastically welcomed the promise that their children can be super kids with a bit of effort on their parts. Some of these parents have reported amazing success; others have dropped out of the program because it seemed that their children were being robbed of the pleasures of childhood.

Although Dr. Doman claims that his educational techniques have brought out extraordinary skills in those children whose parents have followed his advice, other educators question the long-term effectiveness of the encyclopedic knowledge demonstrated by these very young children and the wisdom of pushing children at inappropriate developmental times (Sharpe, 1994). Critics of Dr. Doman say that the play and fun that dominate the early years of childhood also contribute to the learning process and in the ensuing years a more serious type of learning will move to the forefront. It is then that formal education will reap meaningful, long-lasting benefits.

Now what about the parents of the AHAs? Were they trying to push their children's ability to the limits? No, the parents of the AHAs did not push nor coerce; rather they created the type of atmosphere where it was evident that they valued learning. The love of learning was fostered in the homes of these AHAs. Their children, the AHAs in these studies, had much confidence in their parents and absorbed their respect for learning. These AHAs also described a home environment where there was much fun, pleasure, and humor.

The comments of D. P., 51 years old, will give readers some idea of how the AHA families promoted the love of learning:

> "The children in my family were supervised, not pushed. My parents provided the environment for learning and I am teaching my children to learn to learn. I am teaching my children how to use books, how to type and time restraints. When you teach your children how to study, the rest will follow. Parents have to set the examples."

Listening to the AHAs as they described their home environments reminded me of Professor Benjamin Bloom's (1985) analysis of the home environments that produced the world-famous people who served as subjects in his studies of extraordinary talents. Before discussing the findings of Dr. Bloom and his associates, let me inform readers that Dr. Bloom believes, as I do, that most people are born with tremendous potential, though not always in the same areas, but whether or not an individual's native skills blossom depends heavily on the surrounding environmental circumstances, particularly that of parental support.

What especially excited me about the work of the investigators headed by Dr. Bloom was their findings that the parents of these world-class Olympic swimmers, pianists, and mathematicians did not pressure their children to excel at a young age. Rather, their parents exposed them to those areas, whether it was sports, art, or music in which they, the parents, had an interest and their children followed in their footsteps. What was also fascinating is that *all* the children were exposed to the parental interest area but the child who became the star just had a greater desire to excel in the chosen area than his or her siblings. I would venture to guess that the siblings also performed very nicely in these talent areas but they just didn't reach the level of excellence achieved by their more extraordinary brothers and sisters.

So it was with the parents of the AHAs. They established a milieu in which intellectual activities were highly prized and all

the children, their siblings as well as the AHAs, adopted their parents' love of learning. This love of learning unfolded, grew, and became a very natural part of the lives of these youngsters. It is quite possibly true for many of the AHAs, as it was for the talented subjects of the Bloom studies, that their love of learning was simply greater than that of their siblings. The AHAs also shared something else with the Bloom subjects—the joy that comes from doing your best. Bloom described the dedication of his subjects to their chosen vocations as follows: "There is great satisfaction in excelling" (Pines, 1982). This too reminded me of the AHAs who in their ardent pursuit of academic excellence were similarly satisfied.

Love of Learning: A Shield Against Peer Pressure

When children grow older they often face another kind of pressure—peer pressure. Many of us, familiar with peer pressure, can remember when we were especially influenced by it as teenagers. Probably we are still concerned about what our peers think of us.

It is also true that parents frequently use peer pressure as a reason to explain their children's unacceptable behavior; in other words, why Johnny or Betty behaved badly. If it weren't for peer pressure, their children would do better at school or they would dress more neatly. Yet these same parents are placing greater demands on their children because of the peer pressure they feel from their own friends and neighbors.

Children, especially adolescents or pre-adolescents, are often depressed if they are not doing what their peers are doing. The sensitive areas are not limited to class performance but include sports, dress, dating, and physical appearance. Failure in these areas can lead to suicide in sensitive youngsters.

In some communities brightness or academic performance are ridiculed and gifted students often turn down opportunities to enter special classes or to demonstrate how well they could do because they fear the derision of their friends. Some of our brightest children, particularly those in poorer families, channel their intellectual skills in illegal ways.

The parents of the AHAs appeared to have been minimally influenced by peer pressure. Some of them may have been somewhat competitive but this does not appear to be their driving force. They promoted values for learning for learning's sake, not to impress others with their children's abilities. These parents

also knew that learning promises a future that fortifies against peer pressure.

As the AHAs developed the desire to learn and achieve, they began to feel good about themselves. Feeling good about oneself, as one takes pride in the accomplishments of the mind, leads to the self-esteem that is more durable than the false sense of security that comes from accumulation of possessions. As these AHAs learned that knowledge brought greater control of self and environment, they were more willing to apply themselves to their studies.

They continued their pursuit of knowledge and, as discussed earlier, their parents as well as their teachers reinforced their efforts and successes. Love of learning was at the core of their being and this trait served them beyond the benefits that are reaped through the accumulation of knowledge. The secondary advantages—pride, confidence and self-esteem—freed them from the pressures of their peers. They did not need to compare themselves with others to gain an understanding of their own self-worth.

Love of Learning: A Lifetime Habit, a Commitment, and a Way of Life

More than thirty-five years ago, Mrs. Ewert K. Lewis (Cody, 1990) remarked to a gathering for new initiates of Phi Beta Kappa as follows:

> "The ritual gesture of Phi Beta Kappa has one other meaning. It asserts that the love of wisdom is a fellowship. It is a fellowship across the generations, and across geographical boundaries, and across those much more stubborn boundaries of concept and method that mark out the separate fields of scholarship. For the disputes of those who love wisdom are founded on a common premise, that wisdom is a stern and lovely thing."

The appreciation of wisdom, so beautifully described by Mrs. Lewis, stemmed from the AHA'S love of learning. This love of learning, which grew out of their innate curiosity and was cultivated by caring family members and teachers, became a lifelong habit for AHAs that forever brought them pleasure and satisfaction. They had enjoyed their school assignments, often handing in longer-than-asked-for term papers, and had spent much time in the library.

"The harder I worked on papers, on readings, on oral presentations, the happier I am. I am always happiest when productively engaged in the enterprise of learning. Learning and achieving is the most satisfying of life activities." J.K., Family Therapist

Their books didn't yield edible food but they represented mental food for these mentally ever-hungry AHAs. The remarkable effect of this mental food is that the need for it remained a healthy and productive habit. Their love of learning motivated them in all their undertakings throughout life. The words of Dorothy, an eighty-five-year-old AHA from Colorado, vividly reflect the sentiment of all the AHAs: "Learning has guided me throughout my lifetime."

It has long been claimed that a good education leads to better job opportunities and higher salaries. I am confident that the parents of the AHAs informed their children of this. Parents still continue to advise children that a good education will result in making more money. That education may pay off financially was not lost on the AHAs, but earning large sums of money seemed not to be an important goal. It was more likely that they took the same pride in accomplishing on their jobs as they did in school.

As stated by Marian, a senior AHA from California: "Learning was inculcated as a value, not to earn money." It was this value, this love of learning, that truly enriched their lives and gave them the richest of all payoffs—a satisfied life. Allowing that financial security, a happy marriage, and a fulfilling social life contribute to life satisfaction, researchers still wonder about that one indispensable factor that contributes even more strongly to a satisfied life. In interviewing a group of researchers whose research centered around this quest for life satisfaction, Daniel Goleman (1986) summarized Daniel Ogilvie's findings as follows: "Another powerful factor is how much time people are able to spend doing things they find most meaningful, are most competent at, and take the most pleasure in." For the AHAs, reading and the love of learning are what they took the most pleasure in and which irrefutably determined their lifetime of satisfaction.

Learning to these AHAs was more than a lifetime habit or a value—it was a also a way of life and it forever brought them pleasure. Listen to a New York AHA describe her feelings:

"Reading and learning brightened the family life of my childhood in a poor tenement neighborhood. For a long time in my family

academic achievement and life satisfaction were one and the same—academic achievement made professionals out of all of us. Reading and learning continue to provide my richest, happiest source of leisure-time pleasure and satisfaction."

But learning didn't just didn't make their lives more blissful, more joyous. Learning brought meaning to their lives and to their roles as members of a civilized society. Through learning AHAs gained the knowledge of who they were and it granted them the freedom to be themselves. However, this love of learning that stimulated their individualism also empowered them to better understand and tolerate their fellow human beings.

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Eudora Welty received a Phi Beta Kappa award in 1988 (*Phi Beta Kappa Key Reporter*, Winter 1988/89) in recognition of "excellence, creativity and outstanding intellectual achievement that uniquely enhance the scope of knowledge or depth of human understanding." Her remarks in accepting this award included a tribute to her family's concern for her education, which mirrored the involvement evidenced by the parents of the AHAs. Her words also appeared to unite love of learning with human kindness and fellowship as follows: "They gave me books, they encouraged me in every way, and they would have been so happy at this moment for me." She then went on to tell the gathering that this award fulfilled her parents' idea of how people should live: "to learn and to try to participate in the world and understand their fellow human beings."

This is not to say that every AHA queried or interviewed demonstrated the requisite tolerance and understanding that Eudora Welty expressed. However, their answers to questions on the critical issues facing our nation today, which will be discussed in greater detail in the chapter on Family Relationships, do lead us to surmise that their love of learning, which defined their selfhood, also gave them a yearning for a world governed by harmony, "humanhood" and morality.

R. G. from New York believes that "Learning is inherently good. Knowledge should be used to teach morals. In the subjects I teach I cloak concepts in a discussion of morals."

This quest for harmonious living is so aptly expressed by a teacher from Kentucky when she writes: "The importance of learning can be seen as a civilizing and liberating force. This is how it appeared to me, my parents and my friends."

4

Discipline: Its Role in Academic Achievement

When I was a student, and then later as a teacher, I observed that many bright youngsters simply did not live up to their academic potential. Such individuals were identified as "underachievers"—students who could do well in school but didn't. They may have had the ability to succeed in school but they lacked the motivation and desire to apply themselves academically.

Academic high achievers or those who did very well in school, on the other hand, used whatever innate abilities they were born with very efficiently. They recognized that achieving good grades in school required good study habits and the willingness to forego, or at least delay, certain other pleasures. These pleasures sometimes included playing ball with their friends before doing their homework or going to the movies the night before a paper was due.

When I was growing up, my parents, as well as the parents of many of my friends, set down certain rules about learning and studying. We were told that we could only go out to play with our friends after completing our homework and we were encouraged to hand in our book reports on time. That school was "work and learning" for children, comparable to work for parents, was the theme communicated in our households. The basic lesson was that everyone works and school was children's work. People do their work and then earn play time. So we learned and then we played.

When I entered the higher grades of elementary school, my mother and father no longer needed to remind me of my school obligations. Doing well in school was very important to me and I realized that without the appropriate study habits, my academic goals could not be achieved. The good marks I received in the lower grades was most appreciated and I yearned to continue getting them. What I had developed was the necessary self-discipline that accompanied my strong desire to learn and earn these good grades.

Recognizing how important self-discipline was in my academic career caused me to wonder whether it played a similar role in the lives of other high achievers. However, the way academic achievers acquired discipline about their schoolwork had to be viewed within the context of overall parental discipline.

Defining Discipline

First, what is meant by discipline? It might be a good idea at the beginning to talk about what is *not* meant by discipline. Discipline certainly does not mean punishment, though punishment may be appropriate in some cases.

There are a few situations of clear and present danger when a prompt, sharp slap or pull on a very young child's hand is appropriate. Such occasions involve imminent danger. When a young child plays with matches or walks into a road open to traffic he or she has to be stopped with a smack or tug. It is probably wiser to advise parents that they should be vigilant to the point of holding the small child's hand when walking near open roads or subway platforms, and by removing matches from reach. Yet despite how careful parents or adults may be with children, incidents will arise, especially with very young children, calling for some action that may involve punishment.

Discipline doesn't mean invariable routine. A word such as invariable suggests rigidity and inflexibility, neither of which I would connect with sound development or good child rearing. Fear is absolutely inappropriate to my concept of discipline.

Discipline has to be defined in some positive way. One way of answering the question is to say that discipline can be viewed as the imparting of attitudes and behaviors, firmly and lovingly, chiefly by concerned parents, but also, perhaps, by grandparents, by such surrogates as nannies and maids, by teachers at

all levels, and by others involved with the upbringing of the child. Discipline is undertaken with the goal of encouraging behavior consonant with parental wishes and societal expectations and entails the use of praise, rewards, and potent modeling.

Discipline involves an internal pressure that builds up as the mental model of the acceptable way of performing gnaws at the individual. This pressure is assuaged when the task is completed in the acceptable and approving way. With successful completion of the tasks come rewards, which are often words of praise.

At first children learn their tasks and what is expected of them by observing others. A child learns how to make a bed, wash dishes, or clean up a room by watching a parent or older sibling. The children begin to undertake these tasks on their own, assisted by helpful family members who reward them when the tasks are completed. Mistakes are tolerated in this learning process and children are given the opportunity to repeat their actions until they learn the correct way of doing things. Children are given responsibility for various household chores and take pleasure in accomplishing them successfully.

Learning to become cooperative family members and later responsible citizens takes time and is built up in stages. Eventually, children who have excellent models and a stable home environment will achieve self-discipline; performing the tasks expected of them because of an inner need, not because others are overseeing their actions and deeds.

Discipline in the Home of the AHA

When they first go to school, AHAs strive for good grades to earn praise from their parents and their teachers. From the respondents' answers to questions, it was learned that their parents were pleased when they did well in school. However, from the feelings they expressed about the learning environment at home, their love of learning and education in general, it was obvious that as these AHAs grew older, there was a transition from doing things for family approval to doing things for self-satisfaction and pleasure. They acquired self-discipline. Yet this does not mean that an academic achiever, no matter what his or her age, doesn't appreciate the praise that is forthcoming for personal achievement.

Modeling: A Key to Self-Discipline

How did AHAs develop the attitudes and interest required for school success? Why was the transition from learning in order to receive praise to learning for its own pleasure so smooth for the AHA? The answer was that the parents of these achievers served as models for them to emulate. The parents valued learning and education and passed this on to their children. With some respondents in these studies, whose parents had died when they were young, there were older brothers or other relatives who served as models.

It is what parents do, not necessarily what they say, that is crucial in a child's learning of what is expected. The parents of the AHAs did not only ask their children to read; they themselves read a great deal. They truly valued education and that is why the AHAs wanted to be educated. Here is what some of the AHAs said:

> "Mother was a librarian and our home was filled with books," remembered Betty.
>
> "My mother graduated from the University of Wyoming in 1899 and my father graduated in 1901. They felt that education was the most important thing," recalled Marion.
>
> "My father didn't go to college but he sent his three brothers to college. He spoke to us of how important it was to go on to higher education. We know he valued learning because of his sacrifice for his brothers." These were the recollections of Edward.
>
> "My mother died when I was thirteen or fourteen years old. She had no formal education. My father did not have much education either. My father was disappointed that he did not have the opportunity to go on to college. So he helped his children. My older brothers went on to school and they set the example for me to do well in school." These were the comments of Robert.
>
> "We were surrounded by books. Both my parents were librarians and all the children in our family were encouraged to do well academically," said George.

Unless we suit our behavior to our words, our discipline probably won't work. Confusion and distrust set in if the mother asks the child to read but doesn't enjoy reading herself. She is sending a mixed message. The parents of the AHAs did

not send mixed messages. They read and their children were encouraged to read.

Modeling is a very important part of discipline. A parent can't expect a child to finish homework before watching a favorite television program if the mother or father is seen delaying the completion of a work assignment. Parents often verbalize regret at not setting the right example and blame their failure on a lack of self-control. This is also a mixed message carrying an additional unintended one, namely, that lack of control is acceptable for adults but not for children.

It appeared that it was easy for the parents of the AHAs to inspire their children to excel in school because they themselves esteemed learning and education. For those parents who had less than the desired education, it wasn't a matter of lack of ambition or aspiration but rather circumstances, frequently centering around shortages of money, that prevented them from continuing with their own education. These parents had the occasion to express their love of education by supporting younger siblings and then their own children, our AHAs, in their educational endeavors. The parents of these AHAs served as excellent models for their children.

Parental Discipline: Praise, Fairness, and a Gentle Touch

Expecting children to do well in school is only one parental demand within the context of overall parental discipline that is very important in one's development. Greater insight into the character and personality of these AHAs could be gained through inquiries about their parent's method of discipline, rather than simply focusing on academic expectations. I was also curious about how the AHAs in turn disciplined their own children. Twenty older Phi Beta Kappa members were asked the following questions:

"What were the roles of your father and mother in disciplining you?"

"How consistent was the discipline?"

"Was the discipline the same for all the children in your family?"

"Any sex differences?"

"How did you discipline your children?"

Our AHAs responded with the following:

"There were rules to follow in our family. There was respect to be given; discipline was low-key. My parents served as models to how we would treat our children. My brother and I were treated fairly. My children were reared with the same kind of fairness." Betty, 62 years old, Maine

"My parents were gentle. Occasionally I remember a spanking from my father. This was only done when it was needed. We expected our children to do what we asked them to do. This was done with little fuss. We didn't believe in spanking our children. We had no discipline problems with our children." George, 70 years old, South Carolina

"There was no physical discipline in our family. All my parents had to do was give us a look of disapproval and we behaved. We handled discipline with our children in a similar way." Patricia, 69 years old, California

"If my brother or I were naughty, my father gave us an expression of annoyance. That was all that was needed in our family. We did not use physical punishment with our children. We talked to our children when they did something wrong. We believe if you explain to the child that the child did something wrong, the child will understand. There is no need for physical punishment." Richard, 55 years old, New York

"We weren't spanked much. My family was loving and didn't believe in too much discipline. I do remember on punishment when I was ten years old. I borrowed a book my mother thought was trash and she expressed disapproval. This wasn't a harsh disapproval. My children were not a problem and there was not much discipline in our home." George, 73 years old, Tennessee

For the most part, these comments are representative of the responses of the twenty AHAs we interviewed. The parents of the AHAs seldom stated definite principles of effective discipline; they simply exercised certain methods. The respondents just accepted *their* parents' ways of disciplining them, maintained respect for their parents, and in most cases repeated these practices with their own children. It was generally clear from their responses that their parents were perceived as loving, fair, and not cruel.

Most of the respondents also made the point that *all* the children in their families were treated similarly and like opportunities for education, discipline was equal for all without regard to gender and birth order.

In speaking with our AHAs, it was learned that they viewed their parents as models with respect to discipline and so they treated their children as they had been treated in their own childhood. Their parents used praise to reward their good behavior and there was little or no physical punishment and so they behaved similarly with their own children.

For the most part the parents of the AHAs tended to avoid physical punishment and the AHAs professed even less need for physical punishment in the rearing of their own children. I strongly agree with this recommendation in that numerous studies have shown that punishments do not work nearly as well as rewards in instilling appropriate behaviors.

Going back to the early research of Edward Thorndike (1932) and then to the later studies of B. F. Skinner (1938) and W. K. Estes (1944), psychologists have discovered that punishment does not lead to elimination of undesirable responses though it may temporarily halt the undesired behavior, largely due to the pain and discomfit inflicted at the time. However, these punished responses tend to reappear later on when the child grows older. Undesirable responses are not eliminated by punishment while praise, rewards, or self-satisfaction strengthen and reinforce good behavior and, by so doing, minimize undesirable or bad behavior.

In disciplining their children, the parents of the AHAs communicated clearly that disapproval of certain behaviors engaged in by an AHA did not signify disapproval of the child. The acts, not the child, were unacceptable. The AHAs could distinguish between a disapproving nod from a parent for a misdeed and serious parental disapproval and rejection. In talking with the AHAs, as was noted earlier, they did not recount incidents in their childhood when they were especially angry at their parents, frustrated with some of their demands, or felt rejected by them. Rather, what was heard from the AHAs is that their parents were gentle, treated them kindly, and generally shunned physical punishment. The AHAs were raised in homes with loving parents who respected their children. They, in turn, loved and respected their parents. They also trusted their judgment and followed their advice. For these AHAs it meant doing well in school, and indeed they did.

Throughout my conversations with the AHAs in the studies, I detected a continuous thread of respect—from the homes in

which they grew up to the homes they built with their spouses. The AHAs, who were treated respectfully by their own parents, treated their parents with respect and later treated their own children respectfully.

> As B. W. reported: "Respect was to be given. Our parents were models for how we treated our children."
>
> E. P. says: "We had excellent relationships with our parents and we have excellent relationships with our children and grandchildren. We respect each other's point of view."
>
> F. M. comments: "We respected our parents. We had good relationships with them. The same holds true with our children."

Children who receive respect at home will treat teachers, friends, and others they meet with respect. The parent transmits the attitude and I believe that it is the parents' responsibility to be very clear in communicating values, standards, and limits. Although the AHAs were not specifically asked questions on honesty as a value, I believe that along with this respect, a sense of right and wrong was transmitted in the homes of the AHAs.

These students treated their teachers with the same respect they showed toward their parents. My long experience with AHAs also indicated that they considered their school products their property and expected others to treat their class notes, homework, and test papers with respect. They were not obligated to share this property with other students. This may explain why good students resent others appropriating their work, which they don't see as sharing but rather as stealing.

Of course, the comments and quotes coming from the mouths of these academic achievers have been elicited from the depths of memory and probably have been tempered by time. I am not fooled for one moment into thinking that when they were young children these respondents did not accuse their parents of favoritism and unfair treatment on occasion. Such accusations occur regularly and frequently, almost inevitably, in the normal course of growing up.

I also believe there must have been times when some of our AHAs shouted "I hate you" to a parent. Yet their parents probably understood that the child's "I hate you" really meant "I am angry at you at this moment because you are thwarting my impulse." Because the AHAs describe their parents as fair-minded and respectful of their feelings, their parents must have known

how to deal with such anger and directed the discipline at the misdeed while professing love for the child.

These AHAs came from homes where learning and education were respected, as were personal viewpoints. Young people were encouraged to say what was on their minds and some of the AHAs must have said things that displeased their parents. Yet because they continued to speak their minds freely as they grew up, we can only assume that the style of discipline employed by their parents tolerated the occasional furious words that must have been uttered in anger.

From the vantage point of adulthood or old age, the parents of AHAs are remembered as fair, loving, and wise, or at least very well intentioned. They are remembered as setting house rules but these rules are remembered as being fair and appropriate. The AHAs remember understanding what was expected of them in childhood and behaving accordingly. I have to believe that this overwhelming memory is rooted in the larger truth and that these parents were indeed as the AHAs described them. One respondent's words nicely sums up the discipline experienced by our AHAs as they were growing up: "Excellent parents—gentle, firm, sympathetic, teaching type."

Respect from Parents Engenders Trust Toward Teachers

Children who are respected by parents and older family members also learn to respond with trust toward other adults with whom they come into contact during their childhood. The AHAs brought their positive feelings about adults to the classroom and trusted and respected their teachers. The atmosphere of trust is most important in a learning situation. For students to do well in school, they have to trust and respect their teachers as did our AHAs.

Reflecting upon the discipline experienced by these AHAs, I can't help but comment on how it stands in sharp contrast to the discipline found in the homes of many of today's youngsters, especially those living in our inner cities. Here punishments easily overlap with cruelty, abuse, and sadism. These young people are being scarred permanently by abusive parents. They have become angry and embittered and they fear and distrust adults. They have also been so often abused that they have grown inured to threats of further punishment for their misdeeds. Punishments also breed resentment toward the punishing agents and precipitate unruly and disorderly behavior.

At school these abused youngsters are disruptive, disturb other children in the classrooms, and generalize their distrust and resentment toward the teacher, the authority figure. Such children can barely perform at the minimal standards set for their grades. Expecting them to excel would be foolhardy. I am are not saying that these inner city children are incapable of learning and success in the classroom. Rather, the harsh and cruel punishments they have endured at home have made it virtually impossible for them to attend to their lessons in class.

Children as Active Participants in Discipline

Some of the AHAs commented that they talked to their children and explained to them how they should behave. One of the reasons punishment fails in teaching children how to behave is that punishment is not informative. Punishment tells you what not to do but it doesn't inform you about what is correct and proper. Generally overlooked is the fact that children should be active participants in the disciplinary process. The misbehavior or misdeed of the child should be explained until the child understands what was done incorrectly. Furthermore, the child must also be capable of performing the appropriate response. Discipline can be looked on as a negotiating process between adults and children, a search for a mutually acceptable behavior.

In this negotiation process, the child must not be put down. In reacting to a child's misdeed, the angry adult should cool down first and then consult with the child about how to correct the inappropriate behavior. Children often promise their parents that they will correct their behavior. Such good intentions should be accepted and praised. Negotiations generally lead to improved behavior if the requisite level of comprehension has been reached.

Occasionally looks of disapproval may be needed to remind children of their promises. The AHAs reported such looks in discussing how their parents guided them in the correct directions. Wise parents do not threaten or punish but, as soon as possible, involve the child in the solution to the problem and stand ready to guide him or her in that direction.

Good Discipline Requires Rules

In speaking to the AHAs I got the sense that their parents set down rules which they accepted as a matter of course.

E.C.P., 76-year-old man from Virginia: "We never questioned our parents' right to tell children what to do. We had excellent relationship with our parents."

D.S., 85-year-old woman from Colorado: "My parents were strict. There were things we were expected to do. They were strict, but loving."

On the other hand, as discussed earlier, the parents of the AHAs didn't specificaly inform their children that certain disciplinary methods were being employed in their upbringing. Rather, it was in looking back at how their parents treated them, that they were able to identify some of these principles. Praise and nods of approval or disapproval were common. It was in these actions that that their parents conveyed to them what they deemed to be correct or incorrect behavior.

I got the feeling from the interviews with the AHAs that their parents also conveyed their values and standards at mealtimes and family meetings. Readers must be reminded that families spent more time together, discussing family and personal matters, when our older AHAs were growing up. Most of the AHAs remember the pleasantness of family gatherings and the opportunities to talk over things with their parents and other family members. For example, AHAs reported that their families usually sat down to meals together. They were expected to be home at dinnertime, unless they were excused. If they were late for meals, they recalled missing them altogether. Of course, there was some allowance for unforeseen circumstances and their parents expressed some flexibility.

The homes of the AHAs were well run, and such homes had rules and regulations. The reasons for these rules were made clear to everyone and they were accepted, albeit sometime begrudgingly. The rules provided the AHAs with order and such order was comforting. After all, as they reported, the rules and regulations were accompanied by much love and caring.

Discipline Includes Routines

Routines are also a form of discipline and they contribute significantly to the development of self-discipline. Through such routines children learn what is expected of them. Parents hope that in time these household obligations will be carried out with minimal reminders from them. There were also rou-

tines in AHAs' homes about homework. AHAs recall a little rest and play after school followed by a meal and then homework.

These notions about homework were implanted in them early and well. They didn't have the misery of coming to school without their homework. They had absorbed the idea that homework is just another, maybe even a desirable, chore. Also after experiencing the relief that comes with being prepared for school, AHAs may have decided to continue in this direction.

The child who is comfortable with home routines finds it easier to accept the routines imposed by school. School routines include home assignments, book reports, and preparation for tests. The AHAs accepted these obligatory school chores as they did those assigned by their parents.

Discipline Extends to the Classroom

In describing their school experiences AHAs also spoke of order and structure in the classroom. The teacher, like the parent expected students to carry out school chores. Students were assigned to call the class attendance, to erase the blackboards, and to carry messages from teacher to teacher, and all students were obliged to clean up their desks and their work areas. The school reinforced the practices started in the home and strengthened those traits in the AHAs—self-discipline, respect, and responsibility-that were so vital in their success in school and later life.

Professor Kevin Walsh, an education professor at the University of Alabama (Berg, 1992) mourns the loss of discipline and proper behavior in the school classroom that the AHAs remember so well and that significantly contributed to their academic success. Professor Walsh believes that by expecting children to respect their teachers and fellow classmates and by creating an atmosphere of decorum in the classroom, children will develop the work ethic and self-discipline that they need to succeed both in school and on the job. When Professor Walsh was allowed to test out his ideas on classroom discipline in an Alabama school district, greater numbers of students enrolled in the honors courses and many more students took the more difficult science courses.

Critics of Mr. Walsh's argue that such orderly classroom behavior might stifle creativity. Mr. Walsh counters that creatity is enhanced, not lessened, by a degree of responsibility as well as by the self-esteem that grows out of finding and assuming re-

sponsibility. The data on the AHAs examined their performance in the classroom, not their creative talents, and so I can only address the relationship of academic achievement to their conduct in class. The schools that many of the AHAs attended, especially the older AHAs, embraced the values lauded by Dr. Walsh, and the fact that the AHAs did so well serves to bolster his belief that orderly behavior in the class acts an as an asset, not a drawback, in promoting academic excellence. It is my strong conviction that many of today's teachers would applaud efforts to return to a more peaceful and calmer classroom atmosphere.

Discipline Fosters Cooperation and Promotes Civil Behavior

It would be logical to assume that the older AHAs had parents who, like the typical parents of their day, favored obedience to rules and overall respect. However, as Remley (1988) reported in her article "From Obedience to Independence," parental demands changed in the late 1970s with growing numbers of parents stressing independence, initiative, and the tolerance of different points of views. For the most part they abandoned the demand for obedience and the earlier emphasis on good manners. However, in the 1980s, Remley continued, the advocates of individualism feared that self-centeredness was promoting aggression and cutthroat competition and there was a pull toward interdependence and cooperation. Remley quotes psychiatrist Alvin Poussaint as saying, "A healthy measure of connectedness is crucially important." Remley then adds "Indeed, it may be essential if society is to survive."

Connectedness appeared to be bountiful in the homes of the AHAs. Those interviewed commented with delight on the warm spirit of cooperation that existed in their homes. Older brothers helped their younger siblings. Uncles assisted family members. Children had chores and obligations and these were carried out dutifully.

Discipline was not a matter of blind obedience. Discipline was not resented by the AHAs and their siblings but accepted as the way things were done. Furthermore, the readers should not fear that such discipline resulted in the AHAs becoming less independent or less tolerant because, as will be discussed later on, the AHAs ranked high in both of these traits.

Raising children to assume responsibilities and duties should not be discarded for fear that such behaviors would

dampen the development of individualism. When I grew up, my mother, like the mothers of many of the older AHAs we interviewed, did not work. Despite having mothers who stayed at home, there were still chores that we, the children, had to carry out each day. Shopping was a more frequent occurrence, in the age before freezers and frozen food, and we were often asked to run to the store. Generally these chores did not involve monetary payments. Yet my friends and I do remember being offered the opportunity to earn some money for a desired bicycle or roller skates by undertaking extra work around the house. Helping around the house did not cripple me from becoming an individual with a strong independent streak.

Becoming a responsible member of my household early in childhood may have had additional benefits for me as an adult as well. Looking at the Vaillant and Vaillant (1990) study of successful men, which will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 5, one finds that giving children chores to carry out is a strong predictor of later success and happiness.

Today, in many households where both spouses often work outside of the home, children are asked to help with the chores. They are expected to make their beds in the morning or to take the dog for a walk after school. Taking a lead from the AHAs we studied, parents should not hesitate to ask their children to assist them around the house. When parents are fair and fair-minded, children are more willing to respond affirmatively to their requests. A warm spirit of cooperation should exist in the well-functioning family.

Unlike the structured homes experienced by the AHAs, where children were required to abide by fair rules and customs, the extremely loose structure of many families today has led to confusion and disorder. It is far more difficult in this less than cohesive family unit to teach and learn about rights and wrongs, proper behavior, and morals, but teach it we must. Whatever the family makeup, and I am aware of the different family constellations that exist today, it is my belief that families, as well as committees, businesses and classrooms, do need some structure.

Well administered, consistent discipline is not generally resented by children. Effective discipline, with the goal that it become self-discipline, is a difficult challenge for parents and children but one that was found to contribute significantly to the academic success of the AHAs. The disciplinary techniques employed by the parents of these achievers not only con-

tributed to their academic achievement but to their overall mental health and well-being.

Proper discipline also plays a prominent role in cultivating civilized members of society. For me the word civilized has little to do with the way people dress or the house in which they reside. Rather, it is related to competence, control, and the likelihood of success. I would exhort all people who work with children to understand that discipline is inherent in civilization and urge them to be committed to the task of imparting it.

The home is the first and most essential place to start and I concur with Professor Walsh that the school must also be a place where order prevails. If this were generally clear, we would be less likely to have so many uncivilized people in our midst. Discipline does not mean blind obedience nor strict adherence to archaic rules and regulations. Such an interpretation can only undermine rather than support cooperation. Appropriate discipline aimed at promoting cooperative behavior amongst citizens can only serve to enhance the chances of our society's survival.

5

Physical and Mental Health—Is it Related to Academic Achievement

Good physical and mental health are very much desired by everyone just as are beauty and brains. Furthermore, most of us hope to retain good health into our later years; accepting the inevitable truth that with age there will be some loss of our abilities and functions. Presenting highlights from the 1994 Statistical Abstracts of the United States, Holmes (1994) reports that Americans are living longer because they are eating better and smoking less. Although this outlook for a longer life might give Americans something to stand and cheer about, one must remember that it is not just a matter of living longer; a major consideration is the quality of life during these later years.

Results on studies of the very elderly (those age 85 and over) indicate that more than half maintain their own households and with lesser number, about 23 percent living in supervised institutions (Collins, 1985). The authors of these studies make no claim as to the physical health of these very elderly but from their data one may infer that the ability to live on one's own depends to some degree on good physical and psychological health. Maintaining one's household, free from the need of full-time caretakers, also implies a better quality of life because so many people have traditionally equated institutionalized, supervised care with the loss of independence and self-reliance.

In an attempt to tease out those predisposing factors that would predict those individuals who could maintain "high levels of functioning into the seventies and eighties," the Seattle Longitudinal Study has followed 5,000 people, some for as long as thirty-five years, on a number of critical variables. The following factors were found to be related to high performance in later years: "good health, good educational backgrounds, keen interests, positive attitudes, and job satisfaction-as well as living with a smart spouse" (University at Berkeley Wellness Letter, October 1994).

While reflecting on the question of whether the AHAs of this investigation fit the above profile, I chanced upon a most engaging article by Kenneth Seaton entitled "Is There a Link Between Hygiene and Super Intelligence?" (1993). Mr. Seaton's article is not based on surveys or questionnaires, nor can it be labelled very scientific. It is simply his own personal review of the standard of hygiene practiced by some of our greatest thinkers; men of outstanding ability. He looked at the lives of Moses, Thomas Edison, William Shakespeare, Leonardo Da Vinci, Albert Einstein, Sir Isaac Newton, and Oliver Wendel Holmes, amongst others, and surmised that these great minds were also fastidious about their own personal hygiene. Mr. Seaton does not provide the reader with much data to support this hypothesis, nor does he fully explain the relationship; he just concludes that intelligence and hygiene go hand in hand.

However, Terman's (1954) highly respected study of gifted children has led him and his associates to believe along with Seaton, that bright individuals are blessed both physically and mentally. Results of the thirty-year follow-up of Terman's gifted sample showed that the incidence of ill health, mortality, and alcoholism was below that of the general population.

In keeping with the findings of the above studies, we would expect these educated AHAs to possess those characteristics that would assure them greater physical and mental health into their later years. The question was certainly worth exploring.

Researching the Physical and Mental Health of AHAs Over Fifty

One of the difficult challenges facing research undertaking the study of physical and mental health is the definition of health. One person says she's in poor health, having at least the same

number and intensity of ailments as a friend who says she is fine. Similarly, how do we rate the mental health of individuals?

For this research a useful way was employed to get around defining physical health for our respondents because all such definitions tend to be incomplete and debatable. In the large study of older AHAs, respondents were asked to assume their physicians' point of view in rating their own physical health on a five-point scale from very poor to excellent. How well these ratings would agree with those of their physicians is not known; what is known is where the respondents placed their checks on the rating scale distributed to them. Because the literature supports a strong relationship between older patients' assessment of their health and their physicians' view of their condition, (Belsky, 1984, p. 52), there was confidence in these AHA ratings.

With respect to physical health, it could also be safely assumed that individuals over fifty have seen a doctor within the recent past and could answer the question on physical health as it was phrased. When it came to mental health, the same could not be assumed because many individuals have never seen a psychologist or psychiatrist. This is especially true of an older population with many respondents above the age of sixty. Here the respondents were asked to rate their own mental health, hoping these subjects would be as knowledgeable in this area as they had been in others. Because the question could be answered anonymously, their integrity was counted on as well.

How Older AHAs Rated Their Physical Health

The question on physical health read: "Assuming your physicians's point of view, rate your general physical health." The results are quite clear—as a group the AHAs were enjoying good health (see Table 5-1). Over 80 percent of the 915 respondents who answered this question categorized their health as *good* or *excellent*, while only about 5 percent selected the ratings *poor* or *very poor*. While statisticians know that there is a general human tendency for people to rate themselves as fair or average, on this question only 10 percent of the men and 14.4 percent of the women rated themselves as *average*. Indeed, almost all the reports of ill health were from the oldest subjects, which is not at all surprising but simply realistic. We should be reminded that all the subjects in this study were at least fifty years old.

TABLE 5.1
General Physical Health

	Very Poor		Poor		Average		Good		Excellent		N.A.		Total
Age	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Men's Responses													
50-64	0		10	4.9	17	8	88	43.1	88	43.1	1	.5	204
65-74	0		8	4.9	13	8	79	48.8	59	36.4	1	.6	162
75-96	1	1.6	5	8.1	11	18	30	48.4	15	24.2	0		62
	1	.2	23	5.4	41	10	197	46.0	162	37.9	2	.5	428
Women's Responses													
50-64	1	.5	11	5.2	16	7.5	95	44.6	90	42.1			213
65-74			4	2.7	27	18.5	60	41.1	55	37.7			146
75-96	4	3.1	9	7.0	27	21.5	62	48.4	22	17.2	4	3.1	128
	5	1.0	24	4.9	70	14.4	217	44.6	167	34.3	4	.8	487

Oldsters are generally proud of their good health but still we are delighted with the up attitudes of this group. More recent studies (Palmore, 1986) found very similar results but Palmore's studies were unrelated to academic ability and the AHAs in this study are even more positive about their own health. At the very least, they may not be healthier than the general population, but they know how to cope with their physical health in their later years. They are realistic enough to know that age brings certain physical limitations. They are probably taking these in stride, complaining less and coping better. In general, AHAs are good at coping.

Personal Comments Support Good Health for the AHAs

Pleased with the findings that these older AHAs appeared to be in good health, I decided to obtain further assurance and some individual insight on a more personal level. In the telephone conversations with the smaller sample, further inquiry was made about their physical health. Their answers in the following quotes only strengthen the earlier conclusion.

> "I canoe, swim and hike and feel very good physically. There are so many opportunities now for physical activities. This is a good time of my life." These are the words of a sixty-year-old AHA.

A seventy-six-year-old respondent answered: "I lead a very full life, walk a mile a day, work in my garden and feel very good."

"My physical health is simply excellent," responded a seventy-nine-year-old female AHA.

An eighty-five-year-old female printmaker is still engaged in her art and reported her health as "excellent."

When a seventy-year-old man was asked about his health, he answered: "I'm up at 5:30 a.m. and at six o'clock I'm at the gym where I play racquet ball."

A seventy-three-year-old Indiana resident, when asked how he felt, said: "I am in pretty good shape, exercise three times a week, walk several miles a day. My mental health is also good. I feel blessed."

A Question on Alcohol Use

Because I expected recreational drug use to be uncommon among these older AHAs this matter was not explored, but an inquiry was made about the use of alcohol. The question read:

Over your lifetime, which word best describes your use of alcohol? Abstinence (never), rarely, social functions only, frequent or alcoholic.

Thirteen men and three women in the group admit to being alcoholics (see Table 5-2). While four did not respond to this question at all, 76 were absolute teetotalers. Most of the older AHAs responded that they drink at social functions only, but a good number of both sexes checked the word "frequent." It was guessed that frequent meant a cocktail or two a day.

It is commonplace in the general population that more men than women drink frequently and more women claim that they rarely use alcohol. That men drink more than women is easily understood in cultural terms and will likely be true at most levels, including educational. Thus it was not surprising that the AHA males reported more drinking of alcohol than the women.

There is a range when it comes to alcohol, but alcoholism is not a problem among the AHAs studied. Even the sixteen in the group who identified themselves as alcoholic were still functioning well enough to complete the questionnaire.

TABLE 5.2
Alcohol Use

	None		Rarely		Social		Frequent		Alcoholic		N.A.		Total
Age	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Men's Responses													
50-64	11	5.4	39	19.1	84	41.2	62	30.4	8	3.9			204
65-75	8	4.9	30	18.5	63	38.9	54	32.7	5	3.1	1	1.9	162
75-96	2	3.2	13	21.0	29	46.8	18	29.0					62
	21	4.9	82	19.2	176	41.1	133	31.1	13	3.0			428
Women's Responses													
50-64	13	6.1	62	29.1	79	37.1	53	25.0	3	1.4	3	3	213
65-74	16	11.0	52	35.6	50	34.2	28	19.2					146
75-96	26	20.3	45	35.2	42	32.8	15	11.7					128
	55	11.3	159	32.6	171	35.1	98	20.1	3	.6			487

The Shift to Nonsmoking

Smoking is a practice that has undergone tremendous change during the lifetime of these AHAs who are all now over fifty. It was perfectly acceptable and widespread during their youth and in many cases encouraged by the example of smoking parents and by a world where smoking was advertised and considered to be attractive. These mature AHAs are highly intelligent and presumed to be very well read and should be influenced by the latest perceptions of smoking. AHAs between twenty and fifty years old might provide us with a different picture.

When all the subjects were asked if they had ever smoked, just about half answered "Yes." To the question "Do you smoke at this time?" only 12 percent answered "Yes," and the sex ratio was two to one for males over females. The net result is a definite shift to nonsmoking, with the women more successful in stopping. It is surmised that eliminating smoking might account for some part of their reported good health.

Good Health Also Means Less Medication

If these people are really as healthy as they claim, then they probably take little medication. They were asked for a list of medication regularly used. An amazing number of respondents (51 percent males and 35 percent females) listed "no medications" or "vitamins only" (see Table 5-3). In fact, 75 percent of the men and 65 percent of the women do not take more than

TABLE 5.3
Medications Taken on a Regular Basis

Age	None/ Vitamin Only		1		2		3		4		5+		No Answer		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Men's Responses															
50-64	124	60.8	38	18.6	24	11.8	11	5.4	3	1.5	2	1.0	2	1.0	204
65-74	76	46.9	50	30.9	22	13.6	9	5.6	3	1.9	2	1.2	0	0.0	162
75-96	20	32.3	17	27.4	16	25.8	6	9.7	0	0.0	1	1.6	2	3.2	62
	220	51.4	105	24.5	62	14.5	26	6.1	6	1.4	5	1.2	4	0.9	428
Women's Responses															
50-64	91	42.7	68	31.9	30	14.1	17	8.0	4	1.9	2	0.9	1	0.5	213
65-74	46	31.5	44	30.1	29	19.9	18	12.3	5	3.4	2	1.4	2	1.4	146
75-96	32	25.0	33	25.8	21	16.4	23	18.0	11	8.6	6	4.7	2	1.6	128
	169	34.7	145	29.8	80	16.4	58	11.9	20	4.1	10	2.1	5	1.0	487

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one medication regularly. It is clear that the women use a little more medication than the men. However, on the whole these AHAs don't appear to be inclined toward medications. In view of the fact that drugs are often overprescribed for older people and drugs prescribed for one physical condition often interfere with the functioning of other physical conditions as well as with our mental state, these older AHAs may be more healthy because they have stayed away from drugs.

Did AHA parents Live Long Lives?

We have all heard that good health and long life runs in families. This is due to good genes, a proper home environment, or, most likely, both. The survey revealed that the AHA's still-living parents averaged 85; their fathers' average age at death was 73, their mothers' 76. Geneticists and hereditarians would certainly agree that these AHAs had healthy, long-living parents. The AHAs of this study are unlikely to die young. These findings again tie into the earlier data on their good health.

A Question on Sex Interest

How could physical and mental health be probed without including a question on sex? The last statement in the area of physical health read: "Sexual activity should be maintained as long as possible." Respondents were asked to check "Yes" or No," indicating agreement or non-agreement.

Respondents voted yes, overwhelmingly; 95 percent of the women and 98.5 percent of the men. Of course I don't have the foggiest idea what they do about it, but the spirit is obviously willing. In the light of these findings, one thing is for sure-nobody can say that scholars are not interested in sex.

The question dealing with feelings about marriage also elicited very positive responses and will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on family relationships. Married couples who have maintained a good relationship with each other often view their later years as the stage of life when they can be with one another for longer periods of time, enjoying each other's company, feeling less encumbered by family obligations. With so many of the AHAs feeling good about their marriages and their mates, we should have expected positive attitudes toward sex.

Believing that sexual activity should continue as long as possible has to be indicative of positive feelings about sex, and

such feelings should be the result of having established positive sexual patterns earlier in one's life. This statement concurs with the Duke Longitudinal Study's conclusion (Belsky, 1984) that a person's feelings about sex early in life influence later-life interest and behavior.

The AHAs were basically healthy physically and mentally, as the next section will detail, and their good health certainly helped sustain their interest in sex. The sound physical health of many of the older men was especially conducive to their sustained interest, and in line with the Duke study finding that illness often has an adverse effect on male sexuality (Belsky, p. 193).

The Conclusion: AHAs Are in Good Physical Health

There is such a great consistency in the data concerning physical health that it is with confidence that this group of AHAs can be called a remarkably healthy lot. Their good physical health will also allow them to accept aging with fewer gripes and protests. In some ways, the advantages are circular. People who are healthier are less fearful of aging, and those with more positive attitudes toward aging accept the limitations imposed by age, reporting that they are feeling fine. Both ways, AHAs come out ahead.

Older AHAs Are Also Mentally Sound

The questionnaire began to probe the area of mental health as it began the inquiry into physical health—the older AHAs were asked to rate themselves on a scale that ranged from a low of *very poor* to a high of *excellent*. Not a single person of either sex checked very poor, while almost 90 percent of both sexes selected good or excellent (see Table 5-4). I realize that these are self-ratings and that they may also demonstrate self-esteem but this is how the AHAs see themselves. Having healthy parents and being highly intelligent appear to be linked to a good mental health image. This cannot be said of every AHA but surely it is true for a large number of them.

Their Attitudes Toward Psychotherapy

Recognizing that some AHAs may have availed themselves of psychotherapy, the following question was asked: "Have you ever had occasion to use any form of psychotherapy? About 80

TABLE 5.4
General Mental Health

	Very Poor		Poor		Average		Good		Excellent		N.A.		Total
Age	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Men's Responses													
50–64	0		5	2.5	16	7.8	81	39.7	102	50			204
65–74	0		2	1.2	11	6.8	50	30.9	99	61.1			162
75–90	0		1	1.6	12	19.4	24	38.7	25	40.3			62
	0		8	1.9	39	9.1	155	36.2	226	52.8			428
Women's Responses													
50–64	0		4	1.9	21	9.9	84	39.4	103	48.4	1	0.5	213
65–74	0		3	2.1	10	6.8	64	43.8	69	47.3			146
75–90	0		1	0.8	14	10.9	64	50.0	48	37.5	1	0.8	128
	0		8	1.6	45	9.2	212	43.5	220	45.2	2	0.4	487

percent of both sexes answered "Never." There was a declining age factor in negative responses to this question, from over 90 percent among the oldest (75 to 90 years) to 71 percent in the youngest group (50 to 64 years) (see Table 5-5).

There were almost 10 percent who utilized psychotherapy briefly and an additional 10 percent reported that they had at one time been in therapy for more than one year. These 20 percent who had some therapy were then asked to rate psychotherapy as *not beneficial, somewhat beneficial or very helpful*. The women obviously appreciated therapy a little more because 54 percent of them chose *very helpful* compared to 37 percent of the men (see Table 5-6).

As a group, AHAs of this vintage clearly were not likely to see themselves in need of psychotherapy, but they do not exclude its use. They apparently had efficient coping skills to deal with their own problems or sought out friends, relatives, or clergy to consult with. Only occasionally did they visit a psychotherapist.

How Do These Mentally Healthy Adults View Their Last Years?

Over the years I have attended many Phi Beta Kappa meetings and have been most impressed by the large number of older members who turned out for them. In talking to these members I learned something about their plans for future trips and other undertakings. Their age did not appear to stop them from planning for the future.

TABLE 5.5
Use of Psychotherapy

Age	None N	None %	Briefly (under 1 yr) N	Briefly (under 1 yr) %	1–5 years N	1–5 years %	Over 5 yrs. N	Over 5 yrs. %	No Answer N	No Answer %	Total
Men's Responses											
50–64	144	70.6	31	15.2	20	9.8	9	4.4			204
65–74	140	86.4	13	8.0	7	4.3	2	1.2			162
75–96	57	91.9	2	3.2	1	1.6	2	3.2			62
	341	79.7	46	10.7	28	6.5	13	3.0			428
Women's Responses											
50–64	154	72.3	31	14.6	17	8.0	11	5.2			213
65–74	113	77.4	16	11.0	9	6.2	8	5.5			146
75–96	116	90.6	7	5.5	4	3.1	1	0.8			128
	383	78.6	54	11.1	30	6.2	20	4.1			487

TABLE 5.6
Rating of Psychotherapy for AHAs Who have been in Therapy

Age	Not Beneficial N	Not Beneficial %	Somewhat Beneficial N	Somewhat Beneficial %	Very Helpful N	Very Helpful %	Total
Men's Responses							
50–64	9	15.0	27	45.0	24	40.0	60
65–74	5	22.7	11	50.0	6	27.3	22
75–96	1	20.0	2	40.0	2	40.0	5
	15	17.2	40	46.0	32	36.8	87
Women's Responses							
50–64	5	8.5	23	39.0	31	52.5	59
65–74	4	12.1	12	36.4	17	51.5	33
75–96	1	8.3	4	33.0	8	66.7	12
	10	9.6	38	36.5	56	53.8	104

Wondering whether these AHAs I met and chatted with were typical of the larger group, a question on their future plans was inserted into the survey: "Which of the following best describes your view of your future years? Over 80 percent chose the two positive responses: *accepting, positive expectations and very positive expectations and plans.* Only 14 percent checked the two negative descriptions: *confused and worried about them* and *resigned to aging, negative expectations* (see Table 5-7).

TABLE 5.7
View of Future Years

	Confused Worried		Resigned (Negative)		Accepting (Positive)		Very Positive		No Answer		
Age	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	Total
Men's Responses											
50–64	4	2.0	19	9.3	97	47.5	84	41.2			204
65–74	0	0.0	20	12.3	71	43.8	69	42.6	2	1.2	162
75–96	2	3.2	13	21.0	33	53.2	14	22.6			62
	6	1.4	52	12.1	201	47.0	167	39.0	2	0.5	428
Women's Responses											
50–64	10	4.7	15	7.0	117	54.9	71	33.3			213
65–74	1	0.7	13	8.9	86	58.9	46	31.5			146
75–96	2	1.6	27	21.1	69	53.9	28	21.9	2	1.6	128
	13	2.7	55	11.3	272	55.9	145	29.8	2	0.4	487

Apparently the AHAs in this larger group were very much like those I have talked with over the years, both in person and over the telephone. So many of them look forward to the years ahead, expecting additional challenges and exciting things. The comments some of them chose to add to their questionaires beautifully reflect the views of the group. In reading these remarks, I kept thinking of the well-known cliche "Life begins at fifty." Or maybe at sixty or seventy?

> "After being a (modestly said) Super Mother and Super Community Volunteer, I am slowing embarking on a freelance writing and editing career. Wrote a cookbook, produced and showed professional etchings. This is a real major transition point in my life. I see hope, progress and a lively intellectual, if not lucrative future for myself. There's lots of life yet! and I enjoy it! (Female, 53 years old)
>
> "I am now trying to write a second novel (number 1 was not published). In a sense this is a change, because I have not seriously attempted fiction in 30 years. But at age 70, I do not consider that my writing is necessarily a vocation. If it does not succeed, it is a hobby—and that's OK." (Male, 70 years old, retired professor)
>
> "I'm redoing an older house with helpful pleasant young people. I look forward to getting my life in good order in possessions and business affairs so the mechanics of life will be easier to deal with and I will have more time for friends.

and the things I want to do—travel, exercise, read, entertaining in my home, etc." (Female, 64 years old, retired)

"I've become an entrepreneur at this stage of my life. We have chosen to take some chances outside the corporate structure, for the opportunity to work at something meaningful to us. I'd rather do this than playing bridge and golf." (Female, 64 years old)

"My plans for the future are expanding, so much new learning. I do plan to retire at 88 (now 72)—but till then hope to make up for some lost time." (Female, 72 years old, physician)

"Have weathered some physical ailments in the past and now have some emphysema. But, still, life is challenging and worthwhile. I am loved! (Female, 76 years old, Housewife)

"I am now retired but attempting to work on my musical skills which I had not developed earlier. I am now at the point of engaging in semiprofessional or low level professional performance. (Male, 68, retired engineer)

The nine prominent octogenarians interviewed for a story in *Psychology Today* (1984) after they were photographed for Nancy Rica Schiff's book *A Celebration of the 80s* reminded me of the AHAs. Their words echoed what we know about the AHAs. The writer Meridel Le Sueur said she was "just beginning to face a big challenge in my work" and painter Raphael Soyer said: "I believe I'm still alive and active because I'm self disciplined." Famous boxing trainer Ray Arcel credits his good fortune as follows: "Throughout my career, I was a strict disciplinarian."

On the other hand, there were those AHAs who were less sanguine about the future. They spoke of suffering from illnesses or the illness of a marriage partner or an elderly parent who was being cared for.

"I am more negative in attitude because of health problems. My husband had a severe heart attack 2 years ago and I suffer from bone cancer requiring continuous chemotherapy. This does not make for a positive prognosis."

Yet this 67-year-old adds:

"I have had an extremely happy and satisfactory life. My attitude toward aging has been conditioned by the last 10 years experience with a wonderful father dying, a mother-in-law reduced to incompetence."

A thoughtful explanation from a 75-year-old respondent, who checked "resigned to aging, negative expectations," made me think that some of the AHAs may have chosen this option because they were unhappy about losing with age those aspects of their mental life, such as memory, that meant so much to them. Yet even this AHA ended her remarks on a positive note.

> "I would not go so far as to view my future years as confused or worried about them, and so checked resigned with negative expectations. Though I am quite sprightly in my movements and thinking, I have memory lapses at times (thoughts and names evaporate). They do return later on. But this infirmity disappoints me. On the positive side, I will mention that I still drive a car, cook and do my household chores, read good solid books, attend lectures, participate in study groups and make my own clothing and some for my daughter and granddaughter."

Are AHAs Satisfied With Their Lives?

So far we have learned that the AHAs appear to enjoy good mental and physical health and it would be reasonable and evident to assume that these are inseparably linked with life satisfaction. Although these AHAs were asked specific questions concerning their vocational success, marital satisfaction, and relationships with family members, this information will be discussed in later chapters. At this point let us look at how these older AHAs rated their lives overall.

The question simply stated: "In sum, how would you rate your life generally?" The two categories *positive and very positive* were selected by 98 percent of both sexes. When we realize that these people are between 50 and 90 years old, this is a tremendously enthusiastic response (see Table 5-8).

Even in the earlier second study, over 90 percent of both sexes made similar choices. In that study the small amount of dissatisfaction was expressed primarily by the AHAs who were in their twenties and thirties, and they of course were not included in the later larger study of older AHAs. Probably they had not yet reached their vocational and personal goals.

In responding to the questionnaires, the older AHAs added their own comments on their life satisfaction. Some examples follow.

> A seventy-one-year-old man stated: "I have had an extraordinarily fortunate life, happy as a professor of English, very

TABLE 5.8
Life Satisfaction Rating

	Very Negative		Negative		Positive		Very Positive		No Answer		
Age	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	Total
Men's Responses											
50–64	1	0.5	4	2.0	89	43.6	110	53.9			204
65–74	1	0.6	1	0.6	68	42.0	92	56.8			162
75–96	0	0.0	2	3.2	27	43.5	33	53.2			62
	2	0.5	7	1.6	184	43.0	235	54.9			428
Women's Responses											
50–64	0	0.0	6	2.8	101	47.4	105	49.3	1	0.5	213
65–74	0	0.0	2	1.4	72	49.3	72	49.3			146
75–96	0	0.0	1	0.8	76	59.4	51	39.8			128
	0	0.0	9	1.8	249	51.1	228	46.8	1	0.2	487

happy in marriage, lucky in my children, healthy enough, bright enough, rich enough. I knock on wood daily. But, I have enormously enjoyed by life, and wish I could start again."

From a sixty-two-year-old man: "Looking back at my answers, they seem very optimistic, but I feel satisfied with my life and my profession. I am fortunate in never having gone through what I would call a severe crisis—no serious accidents, illnesses, no mental breakdowns. All four of my children have college educations and graduate degrees and are doing satisfying, useful things.

A sixty-four-year-old woman responded: "I hope to live to 100. How much I must do, and want to do."

A sixty-five-year-old woman wrote: "A vigorous life, not all smooth sailing, but whose is? One husband for thirty-seven years. Accept some limitations imposed by age—no time to fuss over these."

A seventy-six-year-old woman stated: "I have been blessed by a wonderful forgiving, encouraging Lord (Jesus Christ), by wonderful parents, by a fine, stable husband, by warm and loving members of my husband's and my clan."

From a sixty-seven-year-old woman: "I have had an extremely happy and satisfactory life. We were not in our chosen careers, but on the other hand made a good living in a particularly attractive environment."

Positively Summing Up One's Life

Erik Erikson (1963) describes the last stage of life as one of summing up and reviewing. Healthy adults reach this last stage, according to Erikson, having resolved earlier crises successfully and believing in the dignity of their lives. While many of our AHAs still have "some living to do," the question on life satisfaction allowed these older individuals to reflect on their lives. Their responses led me to conclude that they have reached their later years with a feeling of integrity. They believe that they have done their best and are content with their lives. They do not speak of despair, nor of living lives that were meaningless or futile. Quite the contrary, they view their lives as pleasurable and they are left with many pleasant memories.

Their comments on life satisfaction were consistent with their positive attitude about their futures. When people enjoy good physical and mental health, as apparently these older AHAs do, then they look forward to whatever years remain with good feelings and expectations.

There is no question that illness will befall these AHAs and they will suffer from a whole array of destructive diseases. There also will be other tragedies in their lives. After all, they are human. Yet the large majority of the AHAs report they feel good, enjoy their lives, have hope, and do not worry about what misfortunes may lie in the future.

Why are AHAs Physically and Mentally Healthy?
Searching for Clues: Role of Humor in AHAs' Lives

It is often said that individuals who are considered of sound mind are people who can laugh at themselves and, in general, have good senses of humor. I strongly agree with this view—it is difficult for me to envision a child becoming a well-adjusted adult unless there was a good deal of humor during development. Were the AHAs reared with this humor? If so, this might provide a clue to their good mental adjustment.

There are a few outstanding cases in literature on child prodigies that have given the impression the high achiever is humorless. Two come to mind: the story of Boris Sidis, the pressured child prodigy who spent his adult years collecting trolley transfers and, more recently, Bobby Fisher, the retired chess expert who exhibited no breadth of interests nor fascination with any other area than chess. There is some evidence

that neither of these men were exposed to much humor or variety in their daily lives. Unfortunately, it is these rare cases that have reated the stereotype of the greasy grind or the grim student who has no time for fun.

Readers should again be reminded that the AHAs of this study were not child prodigies, who actually constitute an infinitesimal proportion of the general population. In contrast, the AHAs are people who did extremely well in school and in careers and were found to be competent, contented, and enjoying life. In those telephone interviews when they talked so freely about their family relationships, a question on humor was posed to them as follows:

Would you say humor played and important role in your family?

Here are some of the replies:

"All of us are blessed with a sense of humor. Fathers and uncles told lots of stories and I grew up with humor."

"I'm kind of witty."

"Humor definitely played a role in our family."

"My children are told they are to laugh at everything and they have a tremendous sense of humor."

"Humor is strong in my life."

"Humor played a big part in my life. More an understated kind. It's a turn of phrase, an allusion."

"Humor is always uppermost. Way I judge people."

"Life is too short to walk with a stoneface."

All the answers were consistently and resoundingly positive. Humor obviously was a pleasantly remembered feature of their upbringing. It was also an important part of the AHAs' lives and was passed down to their children. Humor most likely contributed to their well-being.

The humor of these AHAs was also evidenced in the conversations we had on the telephone. Their voices were sprightly, quite a bit of laughter came through the telephone, and they frequently interjected with some humorous comments. After each of the lengthy conversations with these AHAs, I myself felt lighter and more cheerful. I got some kind of high after these conversations with a most pleasant, endearing group of older citizens.

The Contribution of Religion

As the replies from these AHAs were being processed, there was no question that they were indeed a fine group of people. Yet simply speaking of their physical and mental health in terms of their own ratings seemed insufficient in explaining their academic success and their life satisfaction. This nagged at me as the results were being tabulated and summarized. What was it about these people that I had found so fascinating, not only from the surveys and telephone interviews, but from all my personal dealings with them over the years at smaller and larger meetings?

My associates and friends have often heard me comment how much I enjoy myself at national meetings of Phi Beta Kappa members and how I look forward to these gatherings. The majority of the people I meet are well-adjusted, though I have to admit to meeting some oddballs, introverts, and characters as well. Yet there is still some other characteristic that they possess, that is essentially related to their academic success and life satisfaction, that make them so appealing.

What is it? It was difficult to isolate this characteristic but I continued to give it great thought while working on the findings. Then while looking at the question on religion, the light began to dawn on the matter that had long eluded me. However, before identifying this special characteristic, let us look at the role of religion in the lives of the AHAs.

As part of what might be called a generalized fishing expedition, I had lightly probed the religiosity of the AHAs with a small self-rating scale. The scale ran from *atheist* to *deeply committed and concerned with spiritual or religious matters.* (See Appendix C for specific wording of question and the four response options listed—see Table 5.9 for some responses.) The survey did not ask for religious affiliation or about early religious training. What I wanted was just an idea of the role of religion in the lives of the respondents, however they interpreted the word.

Gender differences were evidenced with females expressing more religion in their lives. More than 56 percent of the females rated themselves as fairly religious or deeply committed while 46 percent of the men fell into these two categories. The men were more likely to select the somewhat religious category, which probably meant identification with a formal religion or with a humanist group. In all, a large majority, about 80 percent

TABLE 5.9
Degree of Religion as Spirituality

	Atheist		Somewhat Religious		Fairly Religious		Deeply Committed		No Answer		
Age	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	Total
Men's Responses											
50-64	39	19.1	70	34.3	48	23.5	44	21.6	3	1.5	204
65-74	29	17.9	56	34.6	40	24.7	37	22.8			162
75-96	12	19.4	23	37.1	18	29.0	8	12.9	1	1.6	62
	80	18.7	149	34.8	106	24.8	89	20.8	4	0.9	428
Women's Responses											
50-64	38	17.8	71	33.3	47	22.1	54	25.4	3	1.4	213
65-74	17	11.6	39	26.7	39	26.7	50	34.2	1	0.7	146
75-96	14	10.9	28	21.9	40	31.1	46	35.9			128
	69	14.2	138	28.3	126	25.9	150	30.8	4	0.8	487

of the men and 85 percent of the women, indicated some degree of religious belief.

There was also a relationship between age and religiousness, with the older women a bit more involved with religion and spirituality than the younger women, although all the subjects are at least fifty years of age. For women over seventy-five years of age, 36 percent (compared to 30 percent of those under seventy-five) chose the deeply committed option. In contrast, the oldest men, who was over seventy-five years old, showed a drop in the deeply committed category, with 13 percent choosing this option compared to 24 percent of the men under seventy-five.

The telephone interviews provided more intimate views on the role of religion.

"Religion plays a strong part in our family life."

"There was religion in my family while I was growing up and there is religion in our home."

"My parents were members of the church and so are my wife and I."

"We were casual about our Jewish tradition in our household."

"My children know they are Jewish but that's it."

"I went to Sunday school as a child but am less religious now."

"I belong to the church."

"My parents were active in the church and I still attend."

Summarizing the twenty interviews, there is some indication that the AHAs were brought up with some religious affiliation and that they reared their own children in a similar way. The children of many of these AHAs may discard their parents' practices but it is not believed that they will be rebelling against a rigid, religious upbringing because that is not what they had.

The smaller survey and the analysis of the data from the larger group leads to the conclusion that a great number of the AHAs have some religious belief. It is this religious tie that led me to identify that characteristic that appeared to typify so many of the AHAs. That trait in the personality of the AHAs which is so intimately tied into their success is *character*!

Character includes a strong sense of self and the limitations of the self. Central to the development of character is strong moral and ethical teaching and modeling. It is this moral and ethical component of their sense of self that forms the core of their personhood and is a key component of the AHA's character. It is my contention that religious training was the route that was chosen by many of the parents of the AHAs to facilitate the growth of character in their children. This is not to say that religious training is the only route to the development of a strong set of moral and ethical values but rather that religious teachings at their best can indeed infuse this sense of right and wrong.

Good Work Habits Advance Good Mental Health

The AHAs did their homework regularly, carried out their obligations responsibly, developed good work habits early on in life, and became dependable workers in the workplace later on. In no way should the efficient manner in which AHAs carried out their assignments, as children and as adults, be misconstrued as rigid. Rather this habit of doing things in a timely fashion gave their lives the kind of orderliness that is predictive of good mental health.

Dr. George Vaillant stated in a newspaper interview that the childhood industriousness of a group of Harvard graduates followed over a 35-year period was by the far the most important factor in predicting their adult mental health (Sobel, 1981). This finding, although based on a single cohort of highly accomplished men, certainly supports the notion that the good work habits established by AHAs early in their life contributed to

their well-being. The Vaillant studies examined the part-time jobs held by their subjects as children, the household chores they carried out, and the school grades they received, which were viewed by the authors as a measure of school effort. Information on part-time jobs was not elicited from the AHAs but their descriptions of helping out at home and the effort we know they exerted in getting good school grades allowed comparisons with the Valliant research.

A later study by George and Caroline Vaillant (1990) of these same men at the age of sixty-five found that being well-organized continued as the trait related to their good mental health. They interpreted this trait as indicative of perseverance, which assuredly characterized the AHAs. Parents and teachers should take note of the long-term advantage of introducing good habits early on.

Some Insights to Their Good Physical Health

The AHAs attended school on a regular basis, had the stamina to carry a full academic load with excellent outcomes, reared their families with good results, worked for many years at their chosen professions, and in large numbers reached their later years in good physical condition.

In speaking to the AHAs with whom I was very friendly over the years, I learned that they were infrequently absent from school. This did not mean that they didn't suffer from colds or didn't have the usual childhood illnesses but rather that they remembered missing very few school days. They also reported having parents who couldn't be fooled by those headaches and stomachaches that disappear at three o'clock in the afternoon. Remember that their parents placed great emphasis on a good education—obviously they knew that this could best be achieved by regularly attending classes.

One AHA commented: "I don't remember missing a single day in high school." Another: "Unless I was practically dead, I had to attend class."

Although specific questions on nutritional practices in the homes of these AHAs were not asked, the way in which they depicted their parents as concerned and caring leads one to assume that these same parents exercised good judgment about food choices, exercise, and taking care of the body. These parents probably practiced what they preached or their lessons would not have been taken seriously. Their parents must have

also provided their children with information on illness prevention because they missed so few school days.

The AHAs strongly emphasized how influential their parents were in their upbringing—how much love and affection there was in their homes. It would be safe to assume from these comments that their parents were most attentive to their physical needs and would not overlook ailments. One would not expect an AHA to live in a household where a parent would ignore a fever or fail to tend to a wound. Responsible parents, as the AHAs' parents were, do not ignore or overlook their children's pains and discomforts, and they are ever alert to symptoms of drinking or drug-taking.

Children will find it difficult to succeed in school if they don't receive the proper physical care. A good mind is greatly helped by a sound, healthy body. The parents of these AHAs knew that and created the type of environment that enhanced their physical development.

The Importance of a Mentally Healthy Environment

Physical and mental health go together, and it would also be safe to assume that the parents of these AHAs also provided their children with a home that advanced good mental health.

Without ignoring individual genetic endowment, which is important in mental health, the mental health of the parent or model is an especially critical factor. It is the parent or parents who must establish the environment in which the child can evolve in a healthy direction. It is very difficult to develop good mental health in your children if you're not a model. Since the parents of these AHAs served as such excellent models for them with respect to education, it is envisioned that they were good models for sound mental health as well, and that they practiced the types of behavior they were encouraging in their children.

Furthermore, it is difficult for individuals who are themselves emotionally lacking to enter into the kinds of relationships that are required for sound emotional development. Parent and child are involved in a close relationship and in a healthy relationship the parent will not make excessive demands, will not abuse or ridicule the child, will not fail to encourage communications of thoughts and feelings. Well-adjusted parents will create an atmosphere in the home where children are treated fairly, are permitted to express their emotions openly and honestly, and are not afraid to request advice and assistance.

From all the earlier quotes cited, there is no question that the parents of these AHAs treated their children fairly, encouraged them to express their feelings, and advised and assisted them in all their undertakings.

Mentally healthy parents provide their children with the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential, including intellectually, by respecting individuality. While fostering intellectual development, the parent is promoting the growth of self-esteem and self-confidence, which are so essential to becoming a mentally sound individual.

This viewpoint was summed up well by a thirty-eight-year-old psychologist who reflected on his upbringing:

> "Academic achievement has been an important part of my life satisfaction. In early years, it was part of the base of my self-esteem developed in early childhood experiences."

Where parental support exists, children feel free to explore, to venture, to risk, to chance. In expressing love and respect for their children, parents are creating an environment where the child does not fear occasional failure. Knowing that his or her parents are supportive allows a child to try again after an initial failure. With each success the child is praised and rewarded, and his or her self-confidence is strengthened. In this manner, the child recognizes that there are failures occasionally, but with persistence and parental support success can be built up and in time the child learns that obstacles can be overcome. Knowing that some failures can be withstood will increase abilities and assets and the ever-continuing desire to learn and explore.

These are the words of a thirty-seven-year-old family therapist.

> "I have used academic achievement as a way of enhancing self-confidence to become a greater achiever in other areas of my life, getting great satisfaction from exploring, learning, attempting to understand. This is true for me spiritually and in the professional realm as well."

Self-Confidence Promotes Success—In School, On the Job, With Life

AHAs know that some failure is natural but their overall self-confidence tends to make them feel that more often they will succeed in their undertakings. On school examinations, they don't

answer every item on the examination correctly but they get enough right to feel assured in test-taking. They have good reason to expect favorable outcomes in their examinations. Sarason and Mandler (1952), when they found no relationship between test anxiety and college grades, explained that good students learn how to handle their test anxiety by studying and being prepared for school examinations. Again from what is known about academic achievers, it is safe to conclude that they dealt with test anxiety by being well prepared for their examinations.

Alpert and Haber (1960) reasoned that certain students have what they call "facilitating test anxiety," positive feelings and attitudes about school that facilitate their test performance. Such students look forward to tests because it gives them the opportunity to shine. AHAs have said that they, like many other students, worried about doing well on tests, but despite such negative feelings they had positive ones as well and looked forward to tests because tests give them the chance to show what they know.

Very often it is not the anxiety itself that differentiates the poor student from the good one but how the student deals with this text anxiety. Students who respond to tests by worrying, by not studying, or by staring at the examination questions rather than completing them do poorly in school and often have to drop out. On the other hand, AHAs have learned to cope with examinations and it is this coping ability that allows them to succeed academically and that distinguished them from the dropouts.

At their jobs, AHAs looked forward to challenge because again this was the opportunity to excel. Self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-reliance, nurtured by loving parents, and reinforced by good grades in school, are strongly related to professional and personal growth and success.

> From a forty-year-old audiologist: "From a very early age, scholastic achievement was highly rewarded and praised. Certainly as an adult, the need for a stimulating, challenging career is essential for me."
>
> A thirty-two-year-old stated: "Good grades in both high school and college convinced me that I was a worthy, intelligent person. The confidence my grades gave me also sustained me."
>
> A thirty-year-old financial analyst commented: "Academic advancement is an important part of my life. I strive to con-

tinually expand and grow. That translates into taking courses through work and on my own. It also means accepting varied job assignments. I find that I am most satisfied when I am learning. I also find that this stimulates me and affects my approach in all areas of my life.

A seventy-four-year-old retired professor summed it up nicely. "If I were to isolate the academic part of my life, I would say that it afforded me challenges and the need to grow and change which I considered important to my development."

Most of the AHAs reported good family relationships and from their descriptions of their homes it appears that the climate there was basically very sound. Their words vividly describe a home supportive of emotional maturity and health. Their parents treated them fairly, lovingly, and with great respect. They also had good relationships with their siblings and other family members. Is it any wonder that these individuals grew up confident in their ability to do well in school, to succeed vocationally and to lead satisfying, fulfilled lives? These AHAs came from stable, responsible families and so they grew up to be both physically and mentally healthy. These findings for the AHAs were similar to those of the Vaillants (1990) who found close family relationships important to later life adjustments.

Their success in school, on the job, socially, and personally also prepared them to succeed in their later years. People can shift from one stage of life more easily into the next if they have handled the earlier stages well. Bolstering this concept is the finding in the Vaillant research (1990) referred to earlier that emotional health in one's later years was very much related to a life-long ability of handling stresses. The AHAs were confident about their ability to cope throughout their lifetime and this made it easier for them to deal with their later years. As they planned ahead in school and were prepared for tests, so they planned ahead for their retirement years. They possessed those traits and attitudes that resulted in a lifetime of well-being.

Undoubtedly these are the very traits and attitudes that Goleman, in his recent book *Emotional Intelligence* (1995), has classified as "emotional intelligence," and that he asserts are far more important than cognitive skills in predicting success in life as well as contributing significantly to what makes us "more fully human." In the set of traits that comprise emotional intelligence, Goleman includes abilities such as self-motivation,

self-discipline and personal responsibility—the very characteristics that the AHAs of this book embody. Self-motivation, according to Dr. Goleman, should guide the individual in "doing homework, finishing a job, or getting up in the morning." Such actions typify the way the AHAs conducted themselves both as youngsters and later on as adults.

Goleman fears that our schools and our society have fixated too much on academic abilities and have largely ignored emotional intelligence, which includes those traits that matter "immensely for our personal destiny." It is to the credit of the AHAs, as well as their parents, that they were able to successfully couple their cognitive abilities and their emotional intelligence, to use Goleman's phrase, and in so doing achieve the kind of fulfilled life that Dr. Goleman believes has eluded so many intellectually gifted people.

Love of Learning Contributes to Health and Well-Being

The chapter on education concentrates on the influence of learning and education on the lives of the AHAs. Their love of learning might be called their cardinal trait, or, as Gordon Allport (1937) more eloquently stated it, their "eminent trait, the ruling passion, the master-sentiment, or the radix of a life" (p.338). It is their passion for learning that has also contributed to their feelings of good health. It is through learning that one can keep on growing and it this feeling of growth that can keep one young. Learning is a lifelong activity that enlarges our interests and broadens our horizons. Learning can make us feel good for a very long time.

In *Successful Aging* (1982), Neuhaus and Neuhaus identify five traits that make the experience of aging more positive and more rewarding. There is little doubt that the AHAs would score high on the traits listed by Neuhaus and Neuhaus—flexibility, awareness of limitations, planning ahead—from all that has been learned about them. However one trait, namely the capacity to keep learning, is unquestionably the trait that they have developed into an art form. The Neuhauses believe that the accumulation of knowledge enhances our satisfaction throughout our lives. It was this activity that shaped the lives of these AHAs and, as the Neuhauses pointed out so well, gave them a lifetime of happiness.

Some Advice for the Changing Times

The traditional home in which the AHA grew up is less common today. Homes today are so different. The family patterns are much more varied and many more mothers are working for both career fulfillment and to add to the family income. It is a well-known fact that over fifty percent of first marriages end in divorce and this number is rising. More children today are living in single-parent homes or with step-mothers, step-fathers, and step-siblings.

History tells us that change and diversity always existed and will continue. There were periods in the not-to-distant past when women frequently died in childbirth and husbands took on second and third wives. Monogamy, polygamy, adultery, and other such variations have always been the stuff of literature and life.

What we have to address is the ability of the family, no matter what its composition, to cope with its responsibilities to the growing children in the household. If the coping ability of the whole family is well developed, then the closeness and strength of the changing family will be assured, and such families will produce AHAs. Love, understanding, moderation, will, and courage are and have always been the ingredients of good mental health and sound family relationships.

6

Vocational Success—Does it Lead to Career Satisfaction

An individual's reputation and standing in the community is very much determined by vocational success, especially in those careers, that are most esteemed in our society. In the first half of this century the most highly valued careers, such as law and medicine, also provided greater opportunities for financial security and stability. Because such careers required more advanced academic study, youngsters were encouraged to go on to college and graduate school. A good education has long been viewed as the stepping stone to vocational success, to societal respect, and to financial security, and most likely the parents of AHAs impressed this belief on their children.

More recently, however, the desire for lots of money became the driving force behind occupational choices and the highest paying jobs became the most sought after. Money rather than competence or career satisfaction in one's chosen work, whatever that career may be, came to signify success and power. In the late 1990s, it appears that these high-paying positions will become very scarce. Future job-seekers may be forced to return to the earlier tradition, which advocated finding decent-paying, secure positions, with good benefits.

Because the greater number of the AHAs of this study grew up at a time when the level of education attained was very much related to vocational opportunity, these AHAs undoubtedly be-

lieved their excellent academic performance had prepared them well for vocational success in a variety of fields. Also one can safely hypothesize that many of them entered those occupations that were most highly esteemed at the time they were growing up. Money has always been a factor in assessing career accomplishment, and although the AHAs may not have necessarily become millionaires, they should have become financially comfortable in their later years.

Yet without discounting either the importance of procuring careers that are highly respected in our society or the importance of money in satisfying life's basic necessities and providing some pleasure as well as leisure, it is my opinion that young people should be encouraged to place career satisfaction and enjoyment high among the reasons for their vocational choices. Because most people work most of their adult lives, satisfaction at our chosen careers contributes significantly to our overall life satisfaction.

The AHAs I have encountered over the years regaled me with stories about what happened at school or at the office, expressing real pleasure about their work, so that I got the strong feeling that they were most satisfied in their professions. It appeared that they had factored in career satisfaction in their choices. Was this true of AHAs in general?

Analyses of the data would provide eagerly sought answers to the following questions:

Would the good grades AHAs received in school be predictive of vocational success?

Did they enter the most prestigious careers?

Were they satisfied with their occupational choices?

Were the AHAs Successful in the Work World?

Vocational Choices of AHAs

The 915 older respondents who participated in the nationwide survey of Fifty Plus Phi Beta Kappas were asked to list their occupations (Appendix C). They were then placed into the following categories: *Education, Professional, Business, Public Services, Arts, Homemakers, Retired, No Response.* Table 6-1 notes the numbers and percentages of the AHAs in each of the occupational categories.

TABLE 6.1
AHA Occupations

	Number	Percentage
Education	315	34
Professional	199	21
Business	130	14
Public Services	61	7
Arts	41	4
Homemaker	70	8
Retired (Unspecified)	56	6
Other or No Response	53	6
	915	100

Education is the vocational field of about one-third of these AHAs. Under this heading were included the many college teachers and teachers at other levels, educational administrators, deans, and librarians. Current (1990), in his book *Phi Beta Kappa in American Life*, notes that a large proportion of the society's members were teachers and professors. He adds that between the 1840s and 1890s, according to a study of the society's members by the renowned psychologist Edward L. Thorndike, more than twenty-five percent became teachers, and then between 1900 and 1930, this number rose even higher. The findings here are very much in accord with Current's figures. In the earlier study by Bronzaft & Hayes (1983) of the New York Phi Beta Kappa members, where there were a larger number of younger people, about a quarter of the hundred subjects fell into the education category.

Twenty-one percent of the older subjects in the Fifty Plus study were identified as *Professionals*. Although this category included mathematicians, architects, geologists, psychologists, and audiologists, the largest majority were doctors, lawyers, and engineers. The Bronzaft and Hayes study (1983) identified a higher percentage, 36 percent, as *Professionals*.

Business was another broad category. It included executives, administrators, accountants, computer analysts, economists, public relations workers, bankers, real estate salespersons, secretaries and personnel workers. Few fell into the latter three occupations. In all, fourteen percent were assigned the *Business* label. This compared to 21.5 percent in the New York sample.

A total of seven percent were assigned to *Public Services*, which included social workers, clergy, government employees, and the military. Writers, editors, designers, photographers,

journalists, musicians, and one actress comprised the *Arts*, which accounted for four percent of the respondents. Both these percentages were the same for the New York Phi Beta Kappa sample.

The seventy *Homemakers*, comprising eight percent, were women. Some fifty-six, accounting for six percent, answered *retired* and did not specify their earlier vocations. A total of six percent included the balance, dominated by those who did not bother to list any occupation. Information on occupation was provided by eighty-eight percent of the respondents.

Did They Enter the Most Prestigious Careers?

This question becomes difficult to answer because today prestige is too often associated with money and fame in the entertainment and sports areas. However, by traditional standards careers that require advanced degrees are still highly esteemed and these included medicine, law, and education at the college level. Elementary and high school teachers, who increasingly need more education to advance in their professions, are not thought of as highly, though they are admired.

If we were to adhere to the conventional standards by which prestige were measured, then we would have to conclude that the AHAs did well vocationally, especially the younger ones. Many were in professions requiring advanced degrees—law, medicine, engineering. In the business category, many identified themselves as executives having authority and standing in their companies. In education, many were college professors and deans. Some of the AHAs in the arts who identified themselves were recognized by the author because they had gained fame in their fields.

Current (1990) had commented on the success of Phi Beta Kappas if such success is not measured in terms of earning power. "A surprisingly large number of them attained positions of importance, power and fame," he states. "All of the first six Americans to win the Nobel Prize were wearers of the golden key, so were all four members of the U.S. delegation to the Washington Conference of 1921–1922; twenty-eight of the sixty-three men and women selected by 1923 for New York University's Hall of fame; eighteen of forty-four secretaries of state; twenty-six of sixty-three justices of the Supreme Court" (p. 172).

To Current's list we can add President Bill Clinton and former President George Bush and the majority of the members of the

Supreme Court: William H. Rehnquist, Anthony M. Kennedy, John Paul Stevens, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, David H. Souter, and Stephen Breyer. Being a member of the Supreme Court has always ranked high in prestige and, despite the many people who denigrate the men who serve in the White House, Americans still hold the Presidential office, if not the President, in high regard.

Just to let readers know that Phi Beta Kappas have demonstrated extraordinary skills in a variety of fields, a partial list of highly recognized names follows: Stephen Sondheim, Leonard Bernstein, Gloria Steinem, Daniel Boorstin, Tom Brokaw, Pat Schroder, Isaac Asimov, Jonas Salk, Sylvia Field Porter, Henry Kissinger, Francis Ford Coppola, and John Updike.

Are the AHAs Vocationally Satisfied?

In exploring the feelings of the older AHAs about their professions, it should be noted that the responses from the most elderly, who have largely lived through the cycle of jobs in their lives, represent a retrospective evaluation. The youngest among the AHAs are still basing their estimate on years of working experience.

The question on career satisfaction simply read:

> How do you feel about your primary career or occupation?—Very Dissatisfied, Dissatisfied, Satisfied, Happy

It is a pleasure to report that happiness prevailed! More than half of both sexes selected *Happy* (see Table 6-2). Education gave these AHAs the opportunity to select careers that could bring them both success and satisfaction. The men outnumbered the women in selecting the *Happy* category, which was completely understandable because for these older AHAs opportunities for men had been far wider than for women.

I would also guess that if the eldest of the AHAs, both men and women, had the opportunities that many of the younger AHAs had, there would have been even less dissatisfaction because of greater opportunity. Nevertheless, over 87 percent women and about 94 percent men chose the two positive categories, *Satisfied* and *Happy*. Fewer than one percent of both sexes selected the *Very Dissatisfied* category.

The same question and response categories had been presented to over 400 Phi Beta Kappas, ranging in age from twenty to seventy plus, in my earlier study. These AHAs similarly ex-

TABLE 6.2
Feelings About Primary Career or Occupation

	Very Dissatisfied		Dissatisfied		Satisfied		Happy		No Answer		
Age	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	Total
Men's Responses											
50-64	1	0.5	10	4.9	84	41.2	109	53.4			204
65-74	0	0.0	5	3.1	58	35.8	96	59.3	3	1.9	162
75-96	0	0.0	6	9.7	18	29.0	37	59.7	1	1.6	62
	1	0.2	21	4.9	160	37.4	242	56.5	4	0.9	428
Women's Responses											
50-64	3	1.4	25	11.7	81	38.0	98	46.0	6	2.8	213
65-74	0	0.0	9	6.2	62	42.5	68	46.6	7	4.8	146
75-96	0	0.0	5	3.9	55	43.0	61	47.7	7	5.5	128
	3	0.6	39	8.0	198	40.7	227	46.6	20	4.1	487

pressed satisfaction with the career; 88 percent of the men and 85 percent of the he women answered *Satisfied or Happy*. Men and women again differed on the *Happy* option—as expected, more men selected this option.

Because we wondered whether the AHAs in their twenties, who indeed had more opportunities than the older AHAs, were satisfied in their careers and occupations, we separated and examined the responses of the 165 in this age group. Nearly 90 percent were *Happy* or *Satisfied*, sixteen were *Dissatisfied*, and only two people, one man and one woman, were *Very Dissatisfied*. The small number of *Dissatisfied* responses may be representing some discontent with a specific job rather than overall dissatisfaction with the goal and direction of vocational choice. This is especially likely with people in their twenties.

The twenty in-depth phone interviews with the Fifty Plus group reflected the same satisfaction in career choice as evidenced by the following comments:

A retired 76-year-old college professor and dean said: "I was very satisfied with my career. I now miss my students."

A retired 73-year-old former editor with a medical publishing company voiced her feeling with: "I'm satisfied with my career and did well."

From another 79-year-old dean: "I was very happy in my career."

A 70-year-old retired banker proclaimed: "I did very well in business."

A 63-year-old retired college professor stated: "I enjoyed my profession."

Factors Influencing Career Choice

It is generally understood that a person's choice of vocation is affected by many circumstances. Money, parental influences, talent, and interest in a field are among the factors that influence career choices. Wanting to learn about who and what influenced AHAs, a list of likely factors was drawn up and the older AHAs were asked to check those that were relevant. They were: *economics, parental expectations, humanitarian interests, instructor(s), and gender.* An *other* category was included with space for comment (see Table 6-3).

Economics ranked the highest, accounting for a little over a fifth of the choices. *Other* and *humanitarian interests* were high, with about twenty percent choosing each of these factors. In this *other* category such words as talent, interest in field, family business, and chance were specified. *Humanitarian interest* was believed to mean something very close to caring about others and this caring served as the psychological basis for choice of vocation.

Parental expectations and *instructors* each averaged about fourteen percent for both men and women. Despite the fact that most AHAs had two parents, with occasional step-parents, who were more constant presences in their lives and especially significant in their early years, and teachers who were more transient, it was most interesting to learn that teachers were often as influential as parents in governing vocational choices. This finding underscores the earlier discussion in the chapter on learning on the importance of good teachers.

The striking difference between males and females was in the number of checks next to the word *gender.* Only nine men claimed their vocational choice was affected by their sex while 108 of the women did. In their working days women had been much more limited in their choice of vocation. The fact that there were some men, though still very few, who chose the *gender* factor may be an indication that their choice of vocation—most likely they were designers, librarians, or teachers—met disapproval from either parents or society.

TABLE 6.1
Factors Affecting Vocational Choice ("Y" Responses Only)

	Economics		Parental Expectations		Humanitarian Interests		Teachers		Gender		Other		Total
Age	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Men's Responses													
50–64	82	22.7	45	12.5	83	23.5	53	14.7	5	1.4	91	25.2	361
65–74	66	24.8	39	14.7	61	22.9	42	15.8	2	0.8	56	21.1	266
75–96	22	27.8	7	8.9	7	8.9	17	21.5	1	1.3	24	30.4	79
	170	24.1	91	21.7	151	21.7	112	14.8	8	1.1	171	24.2	706
Women's Responses													
50–64	58	16.4	37	10.5	81	22.9	33	9.3	67	18.9	76	21.5	354
65–74	64	26.9	36	15.1	39	16.4	29	12.2	29	12.2	41	17.2	238
75–96	41	21.0	34	17.4	35	17.9	40	20.5	13	6.7	33	16.9	195
	163	20.7	107	13.6	155	19.7	104	13.2	108	13.7	150	19.1	787

Although money was ranked first in the factors influencing occupational choices, with twenty percent listing this factor, the author did not believe this meant becoming rich but rather comfortable and secure. We have to remember that many of the AHAs were depression children and fully understood the consequences of too little money in the household. Thus, economics would be an expected component in career choice.

Did Their Career Choices Bring Financial Security in Later Years?

The following personal quotes indicate a secure retirement:

"After retirement, I invested and did very well," responded a former professor.

"My career gave me personal satisfaction, not that much money. But I had enough money to feel comfortable and travel," answered a former architect.

"I have a comfortable life and am not tempted to spend much," was a retired professor's comment.

A retired banker said: "I did very well in business."

That these quotes represent the majority can be ascertained from the question posed to the entire group of older AHAs (see Table 6-4).

I consider my financial situation now and for the forseeable future as: unsatisfactory, adequate, comfortable, very comfortable.

Only seventeen of the AHAs reported dissatisfaction. Among these the sex ratio was twelve women to five men. Thirteen of both sexes were in the fifty to sixty-four year old age group and they may very well have been the retired teachers or librarians who found that their earnings did not reflect their abilities and the pressure of inflation. The women were probably earning less than their male counterparts, and it rankled, especially if they believed they were more capable and more hard working than the men.

Half of the group reported themselves comfortable while another twenty-eight percent chose the highest category, very comfortable. It is evident that over three-fourths of the AHAs are pleased with their financial condition.

TABLE 6.4
Financial Situation Now and for Forseeable Future

	Unsatisfactory		Adequate		Comfortable		Very Comfortable		No Answer		
Age	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	Total
Men's Responses											
50-64	4	2.0	39	19.1	102	50.0	59	28.9	0	0.0	204
65-74	0	0.0	28	17.3	86	53.1	46	28.4	2	1.2	162
75-96	1	1.6	8	12.9	29	46.8	24	38.7	0	0.0	62
	5	1.2	75	17.5	217	50.7	129	30.1	2	0.5	428
Women's Responses											
50-64	9	4.2	44	20.7	112	52.6	47	22.1	1	0.5	213
65-74	0	0.0	31	21.2	74	50.7	40	27.4	1	0.7	146
75-96	3	2.3	26	20.3	61	47.7	38	29.7	0	0.0	128
	12	2.5	101	20.7	247	50.7	125	25.7	2	0.4	487

Another question on money was also included in the survey. That question read:

The role of money in my life is: unimportant, somewhat important, very important, crucial.

Fewer than five percent of the respondents answered unimportant, and fewer than two percent responded crucial (see Table 6-5). Sixty percent of the men and seventy percent of the women chose somewhat important and thirty-two percent of the men and twenty-four percent of the women selected very important.

Again, this reveals a gender difference, with more men than women viewing money as more important. However, neither the men nor the women responded that money was crucial in their lives, indicating that money was not the overriding determinant.

Most of the AHAs had earned enough money in their lives to live with an apparent sense of security in their later years. They were definitely clever enough to want life's comforts and they appreciated earned prestige. Generally, their academic achievement gave them access to the means of satisfying their needs. While they cared enough to earn sufficient amounts of money to bring them this peace of mind in their later years, money did not appear to be the critical influence in their lives.

Rather, they were able to choose careers that allowed them to weigh in their humanitarian interests, their love of learning, and their intellectual curiosity. Current (1990) reports a similar

TABLE 6.5
Role of Money in Respondent's Life

	Not Important		Somewhat Important		Very Important		Crucial		No Answer		
Age	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	Total
Men's Responses											
50-64	6	2.9	119	58.3	74	36.3	5	2.5			204
65-74	11	8.0	104	64.2	40	24.7	2	1.2	1	1.9	162
75-96	2	3.2	35	56.4	23	37.1	1	1.6	1	1.6	62
	21	4.9	258	60.3	137	32.0	8	1.9	4	0.9	428
Women's Responses											
50-64	4	1.9	138	64.8	65	30.5	5	2.3	1	0.5	213
65-74	5	3.4	111	76.0	27	18.5	2	1.4	1	0.7	146
75-96	9	7.0	92	71.9	25	19.5	1	0.8	1	0.8	128
	18	4.7	341	70.0	117	24.0	8	1.6	3	0.6	487

conclusion by citing one psychologist's comments on the earning power of Phi Beta Kappas.

> The statistics do not prove that the men of the high grades are incapable of earning big money. They merely show that they do not prefer those lines of work which are most lucrative. (p.170)

Are Vocational Satisfaction and Life Satisfaction Linked?

In a statement made at the beginning of this chapter, it was assumed that careers, which so dominate most of our lives, should have a profound impact on our overall life satisfaction. If we are fortunate enough to succeed in our careers, then we should be able to evaluate our overall lives as being more satisfactory. The responses given by the 100 men and women in the New York Phi Beta Kappa Association to the question: "What would you do otherwise if you could?" allowed for a closer examination of the relationship between career and life satisfaction.

The answers to this question, cited in the chapter on learning demonstrated that 75 percent of the AHAs queried were generally content with their lives, asking for little or no change. However, whether respondents were content, as the majority were, or wishing for change, many of their answers centered on professional satisfaction, revealing the important contribution of this facet to life satisfaction in general for these AHAs. Those who felt positive about their lives emphasized delight with their profession, as the following quote so aptly illustrates:

> "Combining a career in academic medicine as a professor and the practice of medicine has been a very rewarding experience. I would not do otherwise if I could do it over again."

For the 23 percent of the men and the 40 percent of the women who voiced wishes for change, the change many fantasized was largely in the direction of broadened careers as the following quotes show:

> "I would take masters and doctorate degrees in comparative literature."
>
> "Continue with more graduate work."
>
> "I would have pursued my doctorate."

These AHAs are not really expressing unhappiness in their career choices; rather they are speculating that they would have advanced further in those careers with more education.

To sum up, the AHAs were satisfied with both—their occupational choices and their lives.

PREPARING THE AHA FOR VOCATIONAL SUCCESS

It Starts Early in Life

The AHAs were prepared for vocational success from their early school years and, most likely, from early childhood. They did their homework and took their school studies seriously. They aimed for high grades and their parents urged them to do well in school and praised them for so doing. AHAs also knew that good jobs and careers depended on receiving a college diploma at the very least. Graduate degrees were frequently sought and attained.

Their allegiance to excellence, which started in the lower grades and continued through college, was unquestionably a tremendous asset no matter what career path the AHA followed. When Dr. Otis Singletary, a former Phi Beta Kappa Society President, was asked in his SKY magazine interview (Cody, 1990) to describe Phi Beta Kappas, he responded as follows: "First of all they've done reasonably well in their academic work and that they are people who have a commitment to some kind of excellence."

It Requires Family Encouragement

Family encouragement was there from the start. Both the chapters on learning and on discipline report on this but here are additional quotes.

"I teach my children to learn, how to use books, to learn how to learn."

"My mother was very encouraging and my father very supportive."

"My parents were very supportive of school and we had to go on to college."

"My grandfather lived with my parents and he greatly encouraged me."

"My parents did all they could to encourage us to go to school."

"My parents felt education was the most important thing. I passed this on to my children and they are passing this on to their children."

Without requisite family support, encouragement, and reassurance, it is difficult for the average or bright youngster to exert the necessary effort and hard work required to excel at school. The disciplined AHAs in these studies received such family support and gave the same to their children.

The AHAs in these studies came from families whose attitudes toward education were similar to those of the immigrant families who came to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These immigrants urged their children to get good educations so that they could better provide for themselves and their own families. The American dream of success was often couched in terms of "getting a good education." The recipient of a good education, it was argued, could enter those vocational fields that pay higher salaries. This is also the same argument that is being used today to keep youngsters from dropping out of school.

More recently it is the Asian and former Soviet immigrant families who, like the AHA families, are urging their children to succeed academically. This pressure to excel in school was very much evidenced in a study of 7,836 adolescent students in the San Francisco area by Dornbusch, Ritter, Mont-Reynaud, & Chen (1990). They found that the Asian parents were more involved in their children's academic studies. These parents urged their children to exert more effort and to put more hours into homework. The result was higher grades.

In Daniel Goleman's *New York Times* interview of Dr. Dornbusch (September 1990), Dr. Dornbusch comments that Asian students more than other groups, believe that "if you do not do well in school, you are doomed to a poor job." Success is school is most assuredly seen as related to attaining a good job. In this very same article Goleman reports on his interviews with a group of researchers who have examined the study habits and performance of Asian American students, in contrast to other groups of students, and Goleman concludes that Asian-Americans view education as a path to upward mobility, as well as a way to neutralize ethnic discrimination. Mr. Goleman's interview of Dr. Stanley Sue was particularly pertinent. Dr. Sue, a

psychologist and an Asian-American, learned from personal experiences that Asian-Americans believe education will provide them with access to good jobs and vocational success.

In his *Times* article Goleman further notes that the parents of many of the Asian-American children in school were themselves professionals before they came to the United States. However, these parents were unable to pursue their careers in this country and feel that the only way their children can achieve some status is to acquire "high status degrees." Thus, the Asian-American family encourages the child to succeed at school through just plain hard work.

Social Intelligence Helps

Psychologists and educators have long been aware that vocational success depends on good relationships as well as sound academic abilities. The successful supervisor has good managerial skills but is also skilled in personal relationships and may be said to have what is commonly called "social intelligence." Furthermore, we also believe that the ability to make friends early in life is a predictor of academic success and in turn professional good fortune.

How early do young children begin to develop social intelligence and how early can we detect whether there is a relationship between social ability and the ability to do well in school? Social skills arise from the interactions amongst pre-schoolers during their play activities and are further developed when children start school. The actual impact of peer acceptance or rejection on academic skills is felt as early as kindergarten days (Ladd, 1990). Rejection can have a powerful effect on whether or not these five and six year olds advance in school, according to Dr. Ladd, and he is quoted in a New York Times interview as saying: "The unpopular kids started to dislike school as the year went on. They had more absences." (Goleman, October 1990).

Examining further the influence of peer acceptance on school performance, Goleman cites several studies, including those by Dr. John Coie and Dr. Kenneth Dodge (1983; 1990), before reaching his conclusion that children who are unpopular with their classmates in the lower grades are likely to fare poorly in their later grades and drop out of school. Parents need to be alerted to the importance of developing social skills in their very young children as well as its relationship to academic success. Recognizing this relationship, schools such as Harvard,

Duke and the University of Washington, have designed special programs to advance "social polish" in the very young so that lack of social sophistication doesn't handicap children in school settings. These programs are briefly discussed in the Goleman article.

There is good reason to believe that the homes in which the AHAs were reared facilitated the growth of their social skills as they did their academic skills. The AHAs were not treated punitively but with respect and caring. Such treatment engendered similar responses from the AHAs who were also very loving toward their parents and would most likely treat others well. People who feel loved and respected, as did the AHAs are more likely to express their feelings and less likely to hide or repress their emotions or project them inappropriately onto others.

The AHAs also reported good relationships with their grandparents, their siblings, and other members of their extended families. They reported frequently visiting their grandparents, uncles, and aunts who lived nearby. They knew their young cousins and often played with them. Children who respond warmly to the many adults and children in their immediate environment are better equipped to respond comparably to people of all different ages in the "outer" world.

Today young people have less interaction with their grandparents, their aunts and uncles, and their cousins, who too often live at distances from them. As a result there is less opportunity for them to interact with their extended families; less chance to exercise their social skills. Greater efforts must be made for families to get together at holidays, birthdays, and anniversaries. Children must be taken to playgrounds and nursery school centers where they can meet others of their ages and practice those social skills so needed for success in life.

One great advantage of playing with other children is that it gives the child the chance to test out social skills, as well as allowing for the development of physical and mental skills. Studies beginning with Piaget (1932) and continuing through the works of Sutton-Smith (1979) have clearly demonstrated the socialization value of play. Although there has been a great emphasis in this book on reading, learning, and education, at no time should the readers feel that the parents of the AHAs didn't know the value of good social fun. In my telephone conversations, it was clear to me that the parents of the AHAs, and the AHAs themselves recognized the importance of setting aside time for being with and enjoying other people.

B.W.: I belong to a social club, the limit is twenty people. We meet at 5 P. M., once a month. Although we discuss current topics and books, we enjoy ourselves at dinner. The people in this club are very stimulating.

H.D.: I'm not a joiner but I enjoy being in the company of a small group of friends.

Further support for feeling confident that the AHAs are socially adept came from the second study on the Phi Beta Kappas living in the New York area. The AHAs were asked to describe their outside activities, other than work and family obligations. This question was followed by a list of activities, which included social, physical, educational, organizational, community, and political, and space to allow the respondents to approximate the number of hours each week they spent in these different activities.

Social activities ranked first for both the men and the women. These AHAs enjoyed going to parties, visiting with friends, and attending other social and cultural events with other people. The AHAs, despite their strong interests in reading and learning (which of course brought them great pleasure) still set aside sufficient time for the traditional fun things. Remembering that humor ranked high with these AHAs, it isn't surprising that they would want to share amusing stories with their friends.

Community affairs and political activities received the lowest rankings. It would appear that AHAs are steering away from involvement in current affairs and are less likely to seek political office. Parents who are so proud when their children become political leaders in school would not agree that humanitarian interests and political involvement are mutually exclusive. I am not saying that academic achievement will prevent children from becoming political leaders. Rather, the interests, attitudes, and values of AHAs may conflict with those needed by political leaders. I say this knowing that our President and former President, along with members of Congress and local legislatures, are Phi Beta Kappas.

Many of the older AHAs interviewed also spoke of not being involved in local politics, although a few were members of their local Democratic and Republican clubs. What caught my attention was how many of these people used the phrase: "I'm not a joiner." Although this referred to membership in community organizations, too often the reference also was to political clubs.

How to explain the rankings and the reluctance of the older AHAs to become politically involved? AHAs rely on their own inner resources to guide them. They feel confident in their own abilities and usually are free to express their opinions and ideas. In school, they ask questions and are eager to offer their own thoughts on different topics. On their jobs, they take initiative. They are in touch with their feelings and can respond more spontaneously with the assurance that truth is paramount. On the other hand, politicians need to be more careful about what they say so that they don't offend. They must conform to social conventions and please people who are their prospective voters. Their image makers tell them how to dress, what to say, and how to think.

AHAs enjoy working independently. When the need arises, they can and do cooperate skillfully. Studying, reading, learning, and puzzle solving are activities they relish; they can be done on one's own. Other people are not needed to enjoy the pleasures of a book, a painting, or a philosophical idea, although sharing reactions reinforces the pleasure. AHAs also enjoy working at their own pace and their pace is often faster than most other people's.

One of the reasons AHAs may not enjoy organizational activities is that it takes much time before a group decision is made. AHAs sometimes have little patience for the long drawn-out discussions at organizational meetings. They like getting things done and the pace of most meetings is too slow for them. To climb the ladder politically, an aspirant must pay in patience and in other ways as well. Such payment involves working for years in political clubs and spending many hours running errands, sitting through endless discussions, and debating illogical decisions. The AHA doesn't generally fit well into such an atmosphere.

We are not saying that AHAs can't aspire to political careers. It is just that I don't believe the political process as it now exists in most places suits their lifestyle. It is for this reason, I believe, that the AHAs ranked community and political activities at the bottom of their list of outside interests although they were taught and appear to be committed to the democratic process.

Their lack of interest in joining political clubs doesn't necessarily reflect a lack of interest in current affairs and issues. Rather, they do have strong social interest. An unsolicited letter from a 72-year-old confirms this view:

"If I remember correctly, long ago in some history course, I was taught that civilization survives in those people who obey the laws, pay their bills and taxes, strive to make the best of themselves (their individual qualities again, not wealth or power), and give all they can to help their children make the best of themselves and try to maintain a world in which they and their children can live in relative peace."

The AHA home was successful in inculcating a love of learning and it was also the place where the social skills of the AHAs were honed. The good family relationships in their homes nurtured their academic skills and most likely did the same for their social competence. The AHAs brought social intelligence to their dealings in the occupational sphere and this contributed significantly to their vocational success.

Self-Reliance, Self-Confidence, and Openness Help as Well

"I have felt utterly free of any spirit of competition and much more comfortable in pursuing my career and my intellectual interests." E.T.S.—74 years old—Librarian

"My academic achievements have enabled me to feel and be self-reliant, able to meet professional and personal challenges. It has been 'ego-building.' It has helped me to think and not shrink from doing." S.T.—71 years old—Social Worker

"Scholastic recognition early on in life helped me know that I had the intellectual strength, at least, to engage the world later on. It helped me become the professional person I am." A. K. O.—51 years old—Psychiatrist

"I received an excellent education and now I am a leader in my field. Being used to excelling carries over to the real world. I have credibility and don't have to waste my time proving myself." C. P. S.—34 years old—Certified Public Accountant

"My knowledge and academic credentials have given me the confidence to obtain and perform in jobs in my field, as well as immense satisfaction." C. F.—40 years old—Systems Planner

Success on the job depends on a set of traits that allows the individual to take on challenges, knowing that in time goals will

be met. AHAs approached their job assignments as they did their exams—with confidence and self-assuredness. They knew they had excelled at school and they expected to do likewise in the work world. Freed from the petty competition often found in the workplace, these AHAs had the inner resources that steered them toward leadership roles in their professions.

Confident about their abilities, they would be more open to criticisms, likely to be less defensive, and more apt to view criticisms as indicators of weaknesses in skills that require further development. AHAs are people who do not fear putting out the extra effort to improve. They did it in school and they can do it on the job. The traits these achievers possessed are extremely helpful in work environments that depend on reactions to performance evaluations that lead to improved performance, not defensiveness and resentment.

SOME FINAL COMMENTS

It appears from research and observations that high grades in school combined with good social skills increased the likelihood of the AHA'S vocational success. If the criterion for success is anything but earning lots of money, then AHAs must be deemed vocationally successful.

To quote again from Dr. Singletary (SKY, 1990) when asked if Phi Beta Kappa was a key to success:

> Is it a key to success? Certainly, a lot of successful people do belong, but there also are a lot who may not necessarily be successful in terms of today's material standards, but who would think of themselves as being fairly successful in life. So while it is a great honor to belong, membership itself is no guarantor of wealth or power.

More importantly, the AHAs were happy with their chosen careers and satisfied with their lives. In the words of Buffalo coach Marvin Levy (1994), who certainly chose a different career path from the traditional academic achiever.

> "Whatever life's work you decide upon, avoid choosing it primarily for reasons of security or because of the money involved. Would I wish to travel a different path if I were granted an opportunity to begin again? My answer is no."

By stressing excellence in academic studies and an appreciation for learning, creating an environment in which good family relationships are fostered, and providing opportunities for interactions with other children and adults, parents will improve their children's chances at success as well as happiness in their careers. It is this chance at happiness that is far more precious than the wealth and power that one cannot guarantee. Parents should also remember to tell their children, as coach Marvin Levy's father told him, in spite of a career choice that must have puzzled his father: "Be a good one."

7

Family Relationships and their Impact on Academic and Life Success

In the study of history, religion, anthropology, and psychology over many years and places, one overriding theme appears to be the influential part a person's family plays during his or her lifetime. This includes the birth families from which we come, with its strong impact on our formative years, and the nuclear families we form after marriage. To Margaret Mead, one of the most respected of anthropologists: "The family is the toughest institution we have" (1953). She goes on to say that children are brought up to act as men and women through the influence of their families, and they in turn marry and bring up their children to take their proper places in society.

Leslie (1979) questions whether the family is still the toughest institution, and whether the only way to raise children successfully is in families. Let me immediately point out that for Mead and Leslie, the term family represents what has been traditionally identified as the nuclear family—mother, father and children. It was in this nuclear family that most of the AHAs, especially the older AHAs, were reared, and so the answer to Leslie's question will not be forthcoming in this book but the advantages and strengths of the nuclear family will be commented upon.

That the families of the AHAs strongly influenced their achievements and their overall lives was splendidly documented

in the smaller study on birth order. Despite birth order or gender, it was family encouragement and support that were critical to academic achievement. It was the family that urged the AHA to get as much schooling as possible.

My interest in the families of the AHAs, those into which they were born as well as those they fashioned with their mates, was stimulated by the findings of this earlier study. What did the parents of the AHAs expect of them? Did they fulfill their parents' expectations? What were their relationships with their parents, their siblings, and other members of their larger families? Did they marry and did they achieve marital satisfaction, if not bliss? How were their relationships with their children and their grandchildren?

The readers have already learned from the earlier chapters that the AHAs were treated affectionately, respectfully, and fairly by their parents. This chapter will explore these relationships more fully. In general family closeness and devotion may be more the ideal than the norm. Let us look at how close these AHAs came to this ideal and the impact their familial affiliation had on their academic and life success.

AHAs: Marriage, Children & Family Life

AHAs are High on Their Marriages

After completing the first study on birth order and before proceeding with the larger study of AHAs nationwide, the second study, confined to the New York metropolitan region, looked into the marital satisfaction of these AHAs (Bronzaft & Hayes, 1983). To probe this area the subjects were asked: "If ever married, how do you feel about marriage?" The options: very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, satisfied, happy.

An astonishing 95 percent of the men and 90 percent of the women proclaimed themselves satisfied or happy. Of the men, 75 percent chose the extreme Happy category in contrast to 68 percent of the women. Only a dozen of the 201 AHAs who responded to the question on marriage (nine women and three men) said they were Dissatisfied and just three answered Very Dissatisfied.

The men and women in this study ranged in age from their twenties to over seventy. With so many in this sample still in their twenties, we could not conclude that AHAs as a group were more likely to marry. However, with findings that definitely

yielded the conclusion that AHAs were pleased with their marriages and mates, it could be surmised that marriage for the younger AHAs seemed likely in the future.

When a similar question was posed to the larger group of 915 AHAs aged fifty and over, 89 (approximately 10 percent) reported that they were never married. Here it was clear that a very large majority opted for marriage.

To this majority who were once (many of the older AHAs were widowed) or still are married, the question on how they felt about their marriages was probed with the following options: very negative, negative, positive, very positive (see Table 7-1). No surprise! Overall 95 percent of the men and women who have ever been married expressed positive feelings on the subject of marriage. Fewer than 4 percent viewed marriage negatively. This satisfaction is unquestionably far in excess of national trends today where divorce is so prevalent.

Marriage was very much a part of the adult AHAs' life and one has to be especially struck by the small number who selected a negative view of marriage or expressed dissatisfaction with this state. Steeped in the data, I had to come to the inevitable and overwhelming conviction that the AHAs studied comprised a special and what has increasing become an old-fashioned population—the intact nuclear family with a mother, a father—and, as will shortly be discussed, children.

How AHAs Relate to their Children

The term parent-child relationship customarily refers to the parent's effects upon the child. What about the other way around? How would parents respond when asked about their children's treatment of them? This type of question would be best asked when the children are already grown. The answers to this question would not only inform us of the relationship between the adult child and the parent but also could provide insight as to how these children were treated by their parents when they were growing up. Grown children's attitudes toward their parents stem from parent-child relationships that evolve during the child's early and adolescent years.

Not having the capability to reach out directly to the children of the AHAs for their feelings about their parents, a way to make some inquiry into the relationship between the AHAs and their children was sought. In my second study of the New York Phi Beta Kappa population a question written by Gail Sheehy

TABLE 7.1
Feelings on Marriage

	Very Negative		Negative		Positive		Very Positive		No Answer		
Age	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	Total
Married Men's Responses											
50-64	0	0.0	8	4.1	64	33.0	122	62.9			194
65-74	1	0.7	0	0.0	43	28.7	105	70.0	1	0.6	150
75-96	1	1.6	4	6.6	14	23.0	42	68.9			61
	2	0.5	12	3.0	121	29.9	269	66.4	1	0.2	405
Married Women's Responses											
50-64	2	1.0	7	3.6	79	41.1	104	54.2			192
65-75	0	0.0	4	3.1	43	32.8	83	63.4	1	0.8	131
75-96	0	0.0	2	2.0	35	35.7	56	57.1	5	5.1	98
	2	0.5	13	3.1	157	37.3	243	57.7	6	1.4	421

(1977) for her own research in this area seemed most appropriate. It read as follows:

> *If you have adult children, how much attention and affection do you receive from them (allowing for geographic distance)?—less than I want, about as much as I want, more than I want.*

Of the 115 who answered this question, one hundred and two (89 percent) respondents checked as much as I want. Eleven (9 percent) preferred less interaction, getting more than they wished for, and only two (2 percent) would have liked more interest expressed by their children. On the subject of parent–child relationships, it is wonderful to repeat once again that AHAs are generally very positive. They are seeing their adult children as regularly as they wish. This is as it should be.

The AHAs are reporting that they are receiving as much attention and affection as they want from their children. It seems staggering that only two AHAs felt their children paid too little attention to them. These AHAs must have done something right in rearing their children to have cultivated such good relationships with them.

There is also another way to look at the results. Quite possibly the AHAs don't ask for too much from their children. They may be realistic in their demands and that is why their children can respond to them with the correct amount of fondness.

Another possibility, or probability, is that the AHAs of our studies, who have reported themselves satisfied with their lives,

don't depend on their children for life satisfaction nor live through them vicariously. Their competence and self-esteem are such that they obtain satisfaction most from their own achievements and activities. Indisputably they are proud of their children's achievements, but they don't need their children's successes to validate who they are.

AHAs Respect Their Children As Individuals

To find out more about the AHAS' relationships with their children, the phone interviews probed more deeply, asking the AHAs to describe those relationships. The responses were in agreement with the earlier findings.

These phone calls were fascinating to me in their consistency and warmth. Perhaps they were a bit warmer because the telephone offered the opportunity to elaborate. I was impressed by how often the word "close" was used by these AHAs who came from different parts of the country, had assorted family backgrounds, and entered a wide variety of professions. Here are some typical quotes:

> "We see our children as much as we want we want and we are very close to them," said a 71-year-old part-time bookstore saleswoman from California.
>
> "I am very close to my children and we get together often," said a 69-year-old Californian writer.
>
> "My relationship with my children and grandchildren is very close," said a 63-year-old Connecticut public relations man.
>
> "Excellent," said a 76-year-old retired educator from Virginia. "We respect each other's point of view. We like each other and like to do things together."

Along with their expressed love and devotion for their children and the fact that they derived much pleasure from them, their attitude toward these adult children was still one of "live and let live." They all described themselves and their children as people entitled to their own lives. Not one person, in any of the earlier studies or on the telephone, talked about self-sacrifice or ingratitude. They occasionally used phrases more like, "Of course, I would have preferred."

It was as if they conceptualized the child-rearing task as one of laying a solid foundation and then observing and supporting

the outcome, expecting though not demanding success. These AHAs didn't show a tremendous investment in their children's success though they expressed pride. Remember, the AHAs have their own success. They take pride in their children's accomplishments, encouraging them in their individual paths of academic and vocational endeavors, but do not serve as stage mothers and fathers.

Many of them had children who went though the turbulent 1960s and dropped out of school. However, as you will see from the following quotes, the foundation for love of learning was there and these children returned to their educational roots.

"My older son was a Phi Beta Kappa and received his doctorate. My younger son quit college, joined the navy, and then went back to college."

"My son went around the world for a year, became a Buddhist, then went back to college. He should finish school. My second son was a missionary and just completed his GED, the high school equivalent."

"My oldest daughter was involved in the 1960s protests and dropped out of school. She then went on to build her own canoes. She has now finished the preparatory work to be a chiropractor."

"My son returned to college after leaving and went on to earn his degree. My daughter completed technical school and is doing very well in real estate."

Good Relationships Reach the Extended Family and Beyond

In the telephone conversations, the AHAs were also asked about the relationships with their parents, their siblings, and their grandchildren. The following responses also include that word "close."

The 76-year-old from Virginia described his relationship with his children and grandchildren as excellent. "We took our children and grandchildren to Italy this past summer."

"I respected my parents and have a good relationship with my family," stated a retired 77-year-old professor from Pennsylvania.

"We are very close and always keep in touch," is the way an 85-year-old artist from Colorado described her feelings about her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

"Our family is close to each other because we were real close from the beginning. Most of our fun time was spent together. As years have gone by, we have grown closer and closer." These are the words of a retired 72-year-old banker from South Carolina.

"I have brought up two daughters and helped with advice and love with four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. We discuss all subjects openly and freely. There is no age gap in our relationships. My husband and I are welcome in their groups." This 84-year-old great-grandmother is a former teacher.

While the importance of tradition was not verbalized, there were strong connections throughout the generations. In these phone interviews AHAs reported getting along very well with parents, evidencing real respect and appreciation rather than disciplined devotion to a demand for parental respect. They had about the same love and tolerance toward their own parents as to their adult children and grandchildren.

This extended to sibling relationships, and in those cases where there were neither siblings nor children they formed close relationships with other family members such as cousins, uncles, or aunts. In fact, there was strong support for the extended family.

"My older brother inspired me and encouraged me. He was an outstanding student."

"Before my son died, he informed his wife that all his family's descendants were not to worry about a college education. His wife set up a trust and our grandson, from another child, is now attending college with money from this trust."

"I am very close to my two first cousins."

"I was very close to my uncle and four aunts."

Being close to your siblings, as well as your aunts, uncles, and cousins, also means you can probably count on your family for support in a number of areas, including financial. These AHAs had a sense that they could depend on a family member

during hard times but they were also taught that one day they might be asked to extend a helping hand.

Respect was also extended to the classroom and AHAs did what their teachers required them to do. They knew that their parents would check on their school progress and consult with their teachers about their performance and conduct. If an AHA protested to the parent about a teacher's "unfairness" or "meanness," the AHA was usually told to respect the teacher and work harder. However, the AHAs themselves learned as they grew older that the teachers who were tough on them were the ones who were setting higher expectation levels for them. They not only respected these teachers but as we read in the chapter on education they remembered them fondly.

AHAs were also enjoined to be respectful to older people, figures of authority, and those who were knowledgeable. In general they were taught good manners and so proper behavior extended to store clerks, neighbors, and household help.

They indeed learned to be considerate of other people's needs. Listen to an older AHA on respecting other people:

> "Everyone thinks that it's his own right to do things. There is not enough thinking of other people's rights."

But it wasn't just a matter of being respectful of others' rights; it was also a matter of being thoughtful and kind to other people. In a home where there is love, kindness, and sensitivity to an individual's needs, there is a greater likelihood that a child's good qualities will evolve and be cultivated. I'm reminded of an article that appeared in the *New York Times* over thirty-five years ago in which the writer Dorothy Barclay (1959) urged parents to foster the early signs of humanity in children. "Tender love begets tender love and the relationship between parent and child is, of course, the most important factor in the development of good feelings toward the rest of the world."

My impression of the parents of the AHAs and the AHAs as parents was that there was a conscious family effort to teach the children to empathize with and be helpful toward others. In the AHAs' answers concerning the peace movement discussed below, there is good reason to believe that these AHAs had developed a real sense of responsibility toward their fellow human beings. The following words of one AHA, as she spoke about the plight of immigrants in their effort to adjust to a new country, in some way reveals this attempt to understand the problems of other people.

"We have unfavorable impressions of immigrants today in our country but we have to deal with this issue. We should give them the benefit of doubt as they struggle in this new land of theirs." S. G. Ohio

Religion and Family Life

To the older AHAs the question on religion, as well as the their responses on the telephone (see Chapter 5), led me to believe that they were mostly reared with some religious affiliation that was reflected in their home life. They recalled going to mass with their parents, listening to sermons, prayers in the home, and observances of feast and fast days. As expected, religion is usually accompanied by strictures, ritual, and discipline but it also gives us a sense of tradition and identification with a larger group of people as well as providing an ethical and moral foundation.

Observing religious rites allows children to share joyous and warm events with their parents and other family members. Christenings and Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, as well as birthdays and marriages, are occasions for joyful family gatherings. Families also gather around one another at sorrowful times, when deaths join them in mourning and when they can offer each other assistance.

"I went to church and Sunday school with my father," remembered an elderly banker.

"We all went together to temple on holidays and all the male children were Bar Mitzvahed," commented a male Ph.D. in his late fifties.

Families are especially warm toward each other around religiously based holidays such as Passover and Christmas. It is not that all the AHAs had strong religious training, though some did, but most appeared to identify with the responsibilities of their religion. This identity emphasized their close family ties. It provided them with experiences that contributed to their sense of self-worth and self-esteem.

The paradox of religious identity as a binding characteristic that brought AHA family members closer together and as a divisive force on a national and international scale continues to baffle me, as it must my readers. Wars are waged; neighbors shun each other; schoolchildren are afraid to cross to the

wrong side of the street; speakers won't share the same platform. All of this in the name of religion—even if these different groups believe in one God.

What are the remedies? How can we ever eliminate the terrible effects of religious diversity? This answer to this difficult question may sound simple-minded but it lies in the true meaning of religion—respect, tolerance, understanding, and peaceful solutions to differences. These were the very behaviors that appeared to be plentiful in the majority of the homes in which the AHAs were raised, and the AHAs practiced religion in the best sense of its meaning.

AHAs Spend Time with Their Families

Most of the older AHAs, as was already stressed, came from traditional nuclear families, where the father generally had the more lucrative and highly regard career and the mother spent more time at home. Many of the AHAs themselves lived in two-career marriages but the female AHA was still more likely to be the schoolteacher or the librarian with fewer paid working hours and lower wages. Whatever the home arrangements, these traditional families tended to spend more time together.

In their descriptions of their home life, I was reminded of the characters in the 1950s television programs "Father Knows Best" and "The Donna Reed Show." The parents and the children in these televisions shows had such good relationships. They were together at mealtime; they cooperatively solved family problems; they shared many joyous occasions. I must also admit that these television shows appeared to be more the ideal than the normal.

Yet during the interviews the AHAs referred to spending much time with their parents. Trips to playgrounds, beaches, ballparks, museums, and zoos, as well as to homes of family members and friends, were frequent and part of the family style. Fathers and sons repaired things together and skills were handed down through the generations. Mothers and daughters spent time together, often in the kitchen talking while cooking and baking.

"I enjoyed doing things with my parents, and I now do things with my children and grandchildren."

"Every Sunday we visited my parents' friends."

"My parents taught me how to use books, how to type, and so on."

When we look at the early lives of these older AHAs, for the most part their lifestyles were very similar. Their mothers generally did not have paid employment though they frequently were volunteers in organizations. Most of the recent inventions, home appliances, and child enrichment programs did not exist when these AHAs were growing up. Books, music, church or synagogue, neighborhood, plays, and small family picnics or trips were the stuff of good family life. The frantic rhythms so prevalent today did not exist for them.

I know that I cannot and would not turn back the clock. The advances in science and technology have made our lives easier in many ways. The Concorde and modern jets fly us quickly across the country and the ocean. The simple fact is that the frenetic pace leaves us little time for family activities.

How different the AHA home was from the more recent reports of homes where children receive so little time from their parents, whether or not the parents are employed (Timmer, Eccles, & O'Brien, 1985/1986). It was found that employed mothers spend an average of only eleven minutes with their children and employed fathers spent even less. Mothers who stay home were not much better, devoting only about thirty minutes per day to such activities as reading, conversing, and playing with their children.

Overwhelmingly, the AHAs studied had very good relationships with their parents, siblings, and relatives, and they appreciated them. Strong family structure and family stability appeared to be essential factors in most AHA homes. The parents of the AHAs appeared to understood the beauty and importance of good marriages and good family relationships. At the very least, their children, the AHAs, recognized and appreciated their attempts at establishing a sound family relationship. The AHAs appear to be closer to the ideal of those early television shows.

The Family and Academic Achievement

When results of my earlier studies led me to believe that the families of origin of these AHAs promoted and rewarded their achievement, I was eager to inquire more specifically into their family backgrounds. The data obtained from the older AHAs has

reinforced my earlier impressions that indeed their families were instrumental in their academic lives. The chapter on education leaves no doubt that the AHAs' love of learning, which was paramount in attaining outstanding grades in school, was launched in homes that held education in high esteem.

The Right Kind of Home Environment

The parents of the AHAs immersed their children in an environment that valued learning and knowledge and cultivated the development of those attitudes and work habits that are essential to academic accomplishment. They also enveloped their children with the type of family life that contributed significantly to their scholarly standing.

The love and respect these AHAs received from their parents, their siblings, their grandparents, and other relatives made them feel deserving and worthy. Self-worth in turn spawns confidence, poise and assurance—qualities vital to good class performance. The student who does well in school needs some intellectual ability, discipline, and those personality traits that allow a child to speak up in class without fear but with a degree of certainty.

There was some hesitancy on my part in writing about the traditional family into which the AHA was born because I felt that this might be a bit old hat in light of the changing family patterns. How would readers respond to a book that was upholding the traditional nuclear family as the model to emulate to assure a child's success in school? Before putting down my thoughts and views on this subject, I fortunately came upon the October 1994 issue of *Reader's Digest* with its lead story titled *What's Behind Success in School?* (Wildavsky, 1994).

The Reader's Digest, assisted by Louis Harris and Associates, Inc., asked over 2,000 high seniors, representing a cross-section of the nation's classrooms, to take a specifically designed academic test and then answer a series of questions about their families. The survey, the *Reader's Digest* reports, demonstrated most clearly the importance of families. The students who lived with both their parents scored higher than those living with the mother alone. The students who answered that they were confident in school and who found "their family life was good or wonderful" did better on the test than whose who "lacked confidence and said their family life was okay, bad or miserable."

What really struck a familiar chord was the quote from one of the high-scoring students who gave as his reason for being admitted to college the following: "From first grade on, my father and mother checked with my teachers frequently." One of the most striking findings, according to the author, Rachel Wildavsky, was that the children who ate meals with their families more often scored higher than those who did so less often. This finding, like the quote above, did not surprise me at all.

Here is an article in a popular magazine, read by millions across the country, loudly acclaiming the contribution of the intact family, generally one with two parents, to school success. The intact family structure boosted the Black child as well as the White. The stable home was seen as providing the child with greater confidence and "better organization."

What the *Reader's Digest* survey found was no different from what I had discovered in working with the AHAs, and their recommendations echo mine. The families who dine together share events of the day together, and discussing a child's school activities qualifies as an event. Parents who know what's happening at school make a difference in whether students do well in school. The parents of the AHAs knew what occurred in the classrooms of their children and faithfully tracked their performance.

They read their children's report cards carefully and were aware of their grades. They took pride in excellent grades, and when their grades were less than they expected suggested to the AHAs that they could do better. They oversaw their educational progress.

Stressing the importance of the home environment on children's learning is the article by Carin Rubenstein in the New York Times (1994) that is so aptly titled: "Success in School called Family Effort." Ms. Rubenstein is reporting on the work of Dr. Chandra Muller who is one of more than 150 researchers who are currently analyzing data from a Department of Education survey of 26,000 students who, like the *Reader's Digest* students, were asked to take standardized tests and answer questions on their personal lives. The students were first tested and interviewed in the 8th grade, then again in 10th grade, 12th grade, and after graduation.

Some of the findings have already been assembled and these again stress the pivotal role of parents in their children's educational achievement. Dr. Muller is quoted as saying that children do best when their parents direct their educational ca-

reers, when they can talk to their parents about their school work, and when their television time is limited. Here we have a very recent, very large survey, conforming with all that has so far been written about the families of the AHAs.

As part of this survey, Dr. Drazen, another researcher in this large study, found: "Children whose teacher expects the class to achieve at a higher than average level do better on math and reading tests." Dr. Drazen goes on to say that parents should ask for teachers who will demand more of their children, strongly suggesting that parents should manage their children's learning experiences. I couldn't agree more!

Listening To and Speaking With Your Children

There was generally good communication between the AHAs and their parents. Their parents took the time to hear about their children's accomplishments, listen to what was happening in school so as to praise and motivate them accordingly, and to comfort any disappointments. As Martha, one of the AHAs, so aptly put it: "There was good communication in our home."

Family meetings, whether around the dining-room or kitchen table, at picnics, or at other family gatherings, allows each member to share thoughts and experiences and to ask for advice and assistance and can only serve to bring families together. Such sharing can also enrich the intellectual climate. Children can learn so much from listening to the conversation of the adults around them. What is lacking in the high-risk, disrupted, and disruptive families that enter so many of our newspaper headlines is structure, including rules and opportunities for meaningful discussions.

Family meetings should not be formal. Quiet is almost essential—no television or radio in the background—no obvious or formal agenda, no notes. A meeting can be started by a question such as: "Where should we go on vacation this year?" Any question is permissible. The children should be encouraged to ask them as well. This easy give-and-take between parents and their children also strengthens the family unit.

To the busy parents of today who admit that they spend too little time with their children but maintain that this time is worthwhile and meaningful—in other words, "quality time"—I say rethink your ideas in this area. To me the expression quality time too often smacks of a child being fit into a schedule. From the conversations with the AHAs, it appears that their par-

ents spent real time with them and were there to share with them moments of joy as well as those of sadness.

Providing Your Children With Quiet

There were also other quiet times in the homes of the AHAs—quiet times to read, quiet times to do homework, and quiet times to think. Such quiet served to strengthen their learning skills. Televisions, radios, and stereos were not blasting in the background as is typical in many homes today. Voices were more moderate when the AHAs were growing up. Parents disciplined with stern voices or with looks, not shouts nor screams. "All we needed was a look of disapproval."

There has been a growing body of literature on the effects of noise on learning. Noise takes a toll on children at a fairly early age, as early as the time very young children learn how to talk and explore their environment. Ted Wachs (1982) has found that children being reared in noisy homes are slower in developing their language and cognitive skills. There is less time for children to interact with their families in noisy homes—interactions that are essential to learning how to communicate and how to think. If these skills are delayed, school performance will be similarly deterred.

With many more parents sending their pre-school children to nursery schools, they need to be alerted to the research that has demonstrated that learning is slowed in noisy environments. Preschoolers attending day-care centers near New York City's noisy elevated trains were found by Hambrick-Dixon (1985) to perform more poorly on psychomotor tests. Parents should also be aware that elementary school children who attended schools near airports (Green, Pasternak, & Shore, 1982) and elevated train tracks (Bronzaft, 1981; Bronzaft & McCarthy, 1975) as well as children who lived near noisy highways (Cohen, Glass, & Singer, 1973) scored more poorly on their reading tests than children whose learning experiences were not disrupted by these noises.

The studies on the adverse impact of noise on learning and reading have demonstrated the importance of quiet in the learning process—in the home, in school, and in the surrounding communities. Parents should make every effort to keep their homes quieter and they must find the time to join community groups that are attempting to convince local and federal agencies that the decibel levels in their neighborhoods must be low-

ered. These efforts should strongly enhance children's chances for academic triumphs.

FAMILY: WHERE VALUES ARE FASHIONED AND TRANSMITTED

I identified with the subjects in this study because their lives, both as children and now as adults, were so similar to mine, even though I was a native New Yorker and these subjects came from all over the country. What tied us together was not only our academic excellence and love of learning but the fact that our families shared similar values. This despite the fact that family incomes ranged from marginal poverty to considerable wealth.

The AHAs as a group were brought up in homes that had a strong family unit and stability. Traditions had taken take hold in these families. Just as these parents passed down a love of learning, they also transmitted values such as respecting other people's ideas and thoughts, having some responsibility toward others, and settling problems peacefully.

Tradition has been defined as the "transmission of knowledge and instruction through successive generations without written instruction, by word or example." I, like most of the AHAs, grew up knowing what was expected of me and how to produce it. Our parents had assigned us chores related to housekeeping, marketing, and babysitting, which were carried out dutifully, and praised us when they were carried out in a timely fashion. They indeed prepared us to meet our future responsibilities—in school, on the job, in the home. They also passed on a tradition on how we would handle differences of opinion and disagreements.

The AHAs remember their parents creating an orderly, tolerant household in which all members were encouraged to express their opinions. Arguments were usually not settled by violence but by compromise, accommodation, and, in many families, by consensus. This ethic was considered important and was passed down through the generations.

The children of the AHAs were also raised in a somewhat serene environment. They, like their parents, were kind and loving to their children and these parent-child relationships were well described in the chapter on discipline. The effect of a calm and loving parent on any family can be contagious and therapeutic.

Our parents understood the beauty and importance of good marriage and family relationships and they passed this on to us. Not all of us were able to build happy marriages, though many of us did, but we recognized and appreciated their attempts to guide us in this direction. Similarly we were cognizant of their efforts to keep their marriages and families together. This was part of the tradition.

AHA parents tended to be solution-oriented and strove to settle disagreements amicably. Mothers and fathers may have differed but did so more privately, keeping their disagreements from their children and working them out so that the family could continue intact.

Parents were also sensitive to signs of imminent conflict in the household and attempted to defuse the situation by firmly and softly verbalizing the feelings of an angry child or unhappy husband or wife with humor, affection, and distraction. The popular phrase cool it is appropriate and it might be profitable to remember that the saying that it takes two to tango sometimes means that it takes two to tangle.

Did this ethos of peace extend to the way the AHAs viewed the larger world? Let us look at the answers to the question on the issue of nuclear war and the efforts to promote world peace by the older AHAs. Readers may have to be reminded that these older AHAs still remember a time when the threats of nuclear war, especially between the major powers, were very much in the news.

The possibility of nuclear war:
a) has little or no effect on my happiness
b) distresses me but I do not become involved
c) distresses me and I often contribute to peace movements
d) is a crucial issue and I'm active in anti-war movements

Over half of both sexes chose the second option, indicating concern but not involvement (see Table 7-2). Once again gender reared its head in the first and third options. Answering that their happiness is unaffected by the issue of nuclear war: 25 percent of the men and 14 percent of the women. These figures just about reversed themselves on the third option with more women contributing to peace movements. Very few selected the last choice, indicating active anti-war involvement. Had this study been conducted earlier, there may have been greater involvement.

TABLE 7.2
Effect of Prevention of Nuclear War on Males Only

	Little or None		Distressed Not Involved		Distressed and Involved		Critical Issue Involved		Other		No Answer		
Age	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	Total
Men's Responses													
50-64	57	27.9	92	45.1	35	17.2	13	6.4	2	2.0	3	1.5	204
65-75	36	22.2	84	51.9	30	18.5	8	4.9	2	1.2	2	1.2	162
75-96	15	24.2	38	61.3	3	4.8	3	4.8	2	3.2	1	1.2	62
	108	25.2	214	50.0	68	15.9	24	5.6	8	1.9	6	1.4	428
Women's Responses													
50-64	34	16.0	117	54.9	49	23.0	11	5.2	1	0.5	1	0.5	213
65-75	13	8.9	85	58.2	36	24.7	11	7.5	0	0.0	1	0.7	146
75-96	21	16.4	65	50.8	32	25.0	6	4.7	3	2.3	1	0.8	128
	68	14.0	267	54.8	117	24.0	28	5.7	4	0.8	3	0.6	487

By way of contrast, the later telephone interviews with a small but representative sample indicated a much greater concern with the issue of nuclear war. These telephone interviewees were asked a more open question: "What are the two or three major issues facing our world today?"

Fifteen of the twenty interviewed mentioned peace as an important issue. Yet I did not get the impression that these older AHAs were actually involved in groups promoting peace. Apparently the ethic of peace is still important to these AHAs even though they do not belong to organizations supporting peace efforts and speaking out against wars.

Their answers also exhibited a sense of regard and care for other people:

> "We have to try to understand people and communicate with them. We must try to break down stereotypes; we can't have enemies."
>
> "We have to learn to live with each other."
>
> "We must try to bring comfort to an ever-suffering world."
>
> "We must resolve the conflicts between nations."
>
> "We must correct economic injustices that now exist in the world."

Their humanitarian feelings might be best surmised in a quote from Current (1990):

> In 1924 the president of the United Chapters, Charles F. Thwing, found most of the hundreds of members living abroad to be engaged in education or missionary work. (p.172).

Thwing saw these people as serving the cause of civilization and world peace. To this, I would say "Bravo!!"

It appears that the peaceful ways in which AHA parents attempted to settle household differences carried beyond the home. Apparently the actions and demeanor of these parents transmitted a more meaningful message to their children; that humans must seek alternatives to war to settle their disputes.

Let one of the AHAs, a man from Tennessee, say it in his own powerful words:

> "World peace might be more readily attained if politicians would only try to work out their disputes and differences with reasoned thoughts and words; not with fists, bullets and bombs."

AHA Families Foster Independent Thinking

Families transmit values and standards but also encourage the presentation of children's points of view by urging children to think each issue through on its own merits. In this way parents will strengthen sound thinking practices that will benefit children greatly in school and that likely will enable their children to fairly evaluate the many issues they will confront and judge in their later years.

I was curious to know about some of the views AHAs held on issues frequently discussed in our society, and I wondered whether their thoughts on these issues were in the mainstream. Also I was interested in whether their views on today's issues reflected an upbringing that did encourage independent thinking.

Three hotly debated matters—abortion, capital punishment and euthanasia—seemed especially appealing and were probed in the questionnaire distributed to the Fifty Plus AHAs.

The question on abortion stated:

I believe abortion should be:
a) outlawed
b) permissible (e.g. rape, incest)
c) decision of mother

Overwhelmingly, the AHAs favor the third option, *decision of mother*, which was selected by two-thirds of both sexes. The second option, *permissible*, received 25 percent of the answers. Less than 3 percent of the men and less than 4 percent of the women chose the option, outlawed.

The question on capital punishment read:

I believe capital punishment should be:
a) abolished
b) permissible in rare cases

In retrospect, I realized that the options of this question was severely limited, and I was not proud of the wording. However, AHAs are like many people who will alter an option to reflect their views and correct limited options. Therefore a number of the respondents removed "in rare cases" after "permissible," to allow for another option, "permissible."

The consensus was clear, with 65 percent of the men and 73 percent of the women choosing the option, *permissible in rare cases*. Another 16 percent of the men and 5 percent of the

women chose *permissible* as discussed above. About 20 percent of both men and women selected the option, *abolishment of capital punishment*. Quite clearly, for the most part AHAs want to retain the capital punishment option.

The question on euthanasia simply read:

My attitude toward euthanasia is:
a) favorable
b) unfavorable
c) no opinion

Close to 60 percent of both sexes favored euthanasia while about 20 percent chose the unfavorable option and about 15 percent held no opinion.

It is sometimes believed that outlawing abortion and favoring capital punishment are more conservative views, whereas the more open individual is pro-choice and supports the abolition of capital punishment. The AHAs also were asked to identify themselves in one of the categories in a statement that read:

"Politically I am: a) consistently conservative b) usually conservative c) usually liberal d) consistently liberal" Only about a dozen respondents were unwilling to classify themselves (see Table 7-3). Slightly more than 50 percent the males chose the conservative designations while slightly more than 50 percent of the females chose the liberal ones.

The group appears to be split practically down the middle politically, given their perception of the meaning of the words lib-

TABLE 7.3
Political Positive (Conservative or Liberal)

	Consistent Conservative		Conservative		Consistent Liberal		Liberal		No Answer		
Age	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	Total
Men's Responses											
50-64	17	8.3	79	38.7	77	37.7	27	13.2	4	2.0	204
65-74	24	14.8	65	40.1	40	24.7	30	18.5	3	1.9	162
75-96	18	29.0	23	37.1	15	24.2	6	9.7			62
	59	13.8	167	39.0	132	30.8	63	14.7	7	1.6	428
Women's Responses											
50-64	9	4.2	72	33.8	91	42.7	38	17.8	3	1.4	213
65-74	16	11.0	50	34.2	51	34.9	29	19.9			146
75-96	18	24.1	51	39.8	36	28.1	20	15.6	3	2.3	128
	43	8.8	173	35.5	178	36.6	87	17.9	6	1.2	487

eral and conservative. Yet on the abortion issue they strongly favored the pro-choice position and the majority tended to support capital punishment at least in some form. To the idea of euthanasia, they seemed to take what one would call a more open-minded view.

What can we make of this? The AHAs are thoughtful and properly consider each issue on its merits. This group thinks independently on each issue and it appears to me that they were reared in homes where they were allowed to express personal opinions and views freely.

Good Parenting, Good Family Relationships and a Good Life—Child Rearing Practices Evolve from the Theories of the Times

In speculating about the principles that guided the rearing of the AHAs as well as those employed by the AHAs with their own children, it must be recognized that the AHAs included both subjects who were reared before the popularity of John Watson's influential theories on child rearing and those reared under the influence of Benjamin Spock and others. A brief overview of these theories should give readers some idea of the different theories that were promulgated this past century.

During the early part of this century, when some of the older AHAs were growing up, child psychology was still in its infancy and descriptive data on children were busily being accumulated. Children's development was being determined by measurements taken at different ages and parental expectations were being set by these measurements. Child rearing was influenced, as a result, by the concepts of predetermined development and "fixed intelligence" (Hunt, 1961). Today we still accept developmental patterns such as those that divine that creeping precedes walking and that single words usher in sentences, but we are also much more sensitive to the strong influence that a nurturing environment can have on the child's overall development.

For educated parents, the reigning authority on child behavior in the 1930s was John B. Watson, the leader of the Behaviorist school of psychology. Watson (1925) claimed that mothers who followed his methods could produce whatever kind of child they wanted—doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant, chief and even beggar man and thief. Everything was clear and firm. Very early toilet training, feeding and sleeping schedules unrelated

to the child's wants or propensities, no use of pacifiers or tolerance of thumb sucking, and no overt displays of affection were some of Watson's rules. This meant that a child who had just fallen into an exhaustive sleep when mealtime came around was awakened and fed. If too tired to take the breast or bottle or other food, the baby had to wait four long hours for the next opportunity.

In time just about every rule of Watson's has been overturned. Some of the changes were gradual. Fortunately, many mothers were experienced and many saw what worked and what didn't. When Dr. Benjamin Spock came along with his book, *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*, in 1946, our nation was ready for the era of permissiveness. The dissemination and influence of Spock's book was tremendous, compared to the less publicized works of Anna Freud, Erik Erikson, and others. Throughout the world, Spock reassured mothers that there were no real rules and that kindness and gentleness were the catchwords. Raising children seemed easier and much more natural. As a consequence, many of the grandparents thought that the children were training the parents and some of them still do.

My first child was born in 1960 and the second in 1966, the same year I received my doctorate in psychology. I had been exposed to the works of Watson, Spock, Freud, and Erikson, among others, in my coursework and drew from my favorite theorists in my interactions with my own children. More importantly, I was influenced by my European-born mother who assisted me with my children's upbringing. As a result of educational training and my mother's wisdom, I brought a combination of rules and flexibility to childcare.

Today, child rearing is not so well codified. For the type of parent who was so literal about Watson or Spock, today's authority is usually the family pediatrician, and pediatricians do vary. Many of the older ones have mellowed and some of the younger ones are clever enough to be flexible but age is not the only important factor. Their own personalities, their training, their experience or lack of experience with their own children, all come into play. Breast feeding is in again and toilet training is delayed. Amazingly enough, the "Watson babies" survived their strict upbringing, sometimes beautifully, and many are now doting grandparents.

Parents are also less fearful of making mistakes, for most of them no longer assume that early experiences cause permanent

damage. Psychologist Edward Zigler (1973) comforts parents by saying that mistakes will always be made but that they can be rectified. Jerome Kagan (1979) notes that the problems observed in young children, possibly the result of faulty upbringing, may disappear as the result of the therapeutic effect of new, improved experiences. Psychiatrists Stella Chess and Alexander Thomas (1982) write:

> We now have a much more optimistic vision of human development. The emotionally traumatized child is not doomed. The parent's early mistakes are not irrevocable, and our preventive and therapeutic intervention can make a difference at all age periods. (p.221)

Genevieve Clapp (1988) states: "It appears good starts can be lost and poor starts, with careful effort, can be remedied."

Sound advice is also available to today's parents in the many magazines, health books, and community-based educational courses that are plentiful in both small and large communities. Magazines such as *Child*, *Working Woman*, and *Parents* are just a few examples.

In New York City alone, one large, well-organized and well-known institution, the 92nd Street Y, offers many good courses for parents as well as serving as a resource center. The Y's Parenting Center, started in 1980, is considered a good model for the nation. The Y offers programs and activities for expectant parents, parents, and children, especially from urban families. Members of the Parenting Center, for an annual fee, are entitled to early registration in the courses and discounts on all Parenting Center activities. They also have free use of the Y's library, which has an excellent children's lending library.

Sound Child Rearing Principles Override Diverse Theories

The AHAs apparently grew up for the most part in nuclear families with a mother and a father who lived together, spent much time and ate many meals with them, and were very much involved in their children's upbringing. Their descriptions of how their parents responded to their needs, how they disciplined them, and how they lovingly guided them, educationally and otherwise, caused me to wonder about the principles utilized in their upbringing. Since the homelife the AHAs estab-

lished followed the pattern of their own family life, they very likely adopted many of their parents' child rearing behaviors with their own children.

Though not necessarily deliberate or premeditated, the ways in which both the AHA parents and the AHAs behaved toward their children could have been suggested by the theories of Erik Erikson. A major emphasis in Dr. Erikson's (1963) theories was the premise that all human beings must pass through eight critical stages on their way to becoming mature adults. Because the AHAs in their later years so very much epitomized Erikson's definition of the mature adult—content with who and what they have become, with no despair about the life led and no fear of death—I usurped Erikson's "eight ages of man" concept to forge a relationship between the AHAs' upbringing and the type of adult they grew up to be.

Erikson gave us a very fine capsule of advice in defining the developmental task of the first year as fostering a sense of trust rather than distrust and laying down a solid foundation for the growth ahead. This is done by establishing routines for feeding, sleeping, bathing, and outings, based on cues from the baby rather than imposed by the clock or book. Life should be dependable. When the infant is hungry, there should be food; when the infant is sleepy, he or she should be permitted to sleep. It is a good world for this baby, who is cared for by loving hands and gets what is needed when it is needed.

All that I have learned about the AHAs and their parents teaches me that their parents were attentive to the needs of their children. The AHAs certainly knew that they could rely on their parents, as they frequently expressed, and so did their children. It is this trust that enabled the AHAs to forge ahead, ready to meet and deal with the difficulties that all of us face as we grow up.

Autonomy, initiative, and industry are the next three stages through which the individual must pass before reaching adolescence. The obverse of autonomy is shame; of initiative it is guilt; of industry it is inferiority. From what the AHAs recalled of their parents it was clear that they were reared with neither shame nor guilt, and certainly they were not made to feel inferior. Quite to the contrary, these AHAs indeed felt good about themselves and proud of their accomplishments.

Adolescence is a time of turbulence and disarray, but with "the establishment of a good initial relationship to the world of skills and tools" Erikson believes that the person is ready to

take on the next challenge—that of preparing for a promising career. Is there any question that the AHAs were indeed well prepared for the scholastic demands that would enhance their chances at promising careers?

Once an individual has formed a sense of ego-integrity and is comfortable with who he or she is, that person is ready to commit to affiliations and partnership. That the AHAs were satisfied with their mates and their marriages and developed good relationships with their own children and their grandchildren most vividly demonstrated that they had moved into successful adulthood as described by Erikson.

Their later years were also made easier and very pleasant because of their investments in good relationships with their children and grandchildren. The very loving, supportive households in which the AHAs were reared clearly brought these AHAs through Erikson's stages successfully and was very much the reason for their growth into well-adjusted people.

The grandfather of an old friend was a ladies' tailor. He once told us that he used to buy expensive, definitive pattern books each year. When the new one replaced the old one, he tossed the old one into a carton. Then he realized that styles repeated themselves about every seven years. He stopped buying new books and looked into his barrel for a book that appeared right for the current year. At all times he offered good workmanship to his customers and he had a thriving shop. Similarly, the pendulum may swing on certain child rearing practices, as it did during the lifetime of the AHAs, but the important principles remain.

Such principles include: knowing when children are developmentally ready to undertake certain activities, while all along recognizing the unique attributes of each child; respecting the child; establishing routines but allowing for flexibility; being alert and sensitive to the child's needs and wants; and providing a home that is filled with warmth, sensitivity and love.

Good Family Relationships: A Lifetime of Benefits

It was not simply that the family was critical to the academic accomplishments of these AHAs; strong family relationships lay at the very foundation of the wonderful achievements that typified their lives. It was the solidarity of the family unit in which the AHAs were reared that contributed so mightily to their good fortunes throughout their entire lives.

I have always seen the great wisdom in the following quote from the Bible: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Psalms 133). Indeed, it was good and pleasant in the homes of most of the AHAs. Their stories and memories of their homelives were positive and warmhearted. It is not that everyone interviewed had a perfect childhood nor for that matter one without some stress or difficulty. Some AHAs had described their parents as somewhat strict or stern but added that along with the discipline there was love and respect. It was the tone of the conversations with the AHAs that gave the distinct impression that they had many pleasant experiences as they were growing up. It was the humor that filled the household, the respect for each family member, the encouragement from parents and family members to get a good education, and the joy of family meetings and outings that they so tenderly recalled in voices that words on the page cannot fully capture.

The AHA families so very much resembled the happy families referred to by Dr. John E. Obedzinski, a behavior pediatrician, who advises parents on child rearing. In his article, *Why Happy Families are Different*, for *Readers Digest* (1994), Dr Obedzinski reflects on the happy, resilient families he knew in his practice. He than goes on to define those factors that characterized these happy families. How similar they were to the components that typified the families of most of our achievers! In happy families parents are available for their children, value traditions, nourish a good sense of humor, and set chores for the children, but most of all the secret of the happy family is "flexibility, rooted in love and understanding." Without stating it specifically, Dr. Obedzinski appears to favor strong family relationships.

Is this strong traditional family unit, which formed the foundation for the overall success of the AHAs, still held in the same high regard as it was during the time the AHAs, especially those over the age of fifty, were growing up.? Remember, such a family usually consisted of two parents plus the children, with the father serving as the essential wage earner. The father is no longer the primary wage owner and more typical of our modern homes are two working parents, each pursuing a career, and both trying to balance the work load with family life. Do these two working parents believe in the sanctity of marriage above all? Is holding the family together and family relationships as important to them as they were in the homes of the AHAs?

Yes, according to one of our leading pediatricians, Dr. T. Berry Brazelton (1989), who believes parents are as concerned "about keeping their families together as in doing well by their children." The greater availability of courses, books, and other reading materials has lessened the anxiety in child rearing but the high rate of divorce, Brazelton says, has refocused this anxiety onto maintaining the family as a stable unit.

Brazelton also acknowledges that too many of our modern parents don't have the advantage of the extended family to facilitate their family life as did the AHAs. He has suggested to young parents that they seek the advice and guidance from their own parents but sadly this has met with some resistance. So he has suggested that they turn to other parents, peer groups, and family resource centers for help. The essential thing here is to keep the family intact.

Brazelton finds that despite the effort exerted by families to remain together, the divorce rate continues to grow, making the struggle to balance home life and working for single parents even greater, especially when the financial burdens posed by a single income are added. William Galston (1992), in a most thought-provoking article, looks at the difficulties of raising children by single parents and says "it becomes clear that the economic consequences of a parent's absence (usually the father) may pale beside the psychological consequences—which include higher than average levels of youth suicide, low intellectual and educational performance, and higher than average rates of mental illness, violence and drug use." He then goes on to discuss how we can trace the drug crisis, the educational crisis and many of the juvenile crimes and problems to one source—broken families.

Furthermore, Galston says, "A primary purpose of the family is to raise children well, and for this purpose stably married parents are best. Sharply rising rates of divorce, unwed mothers, and runaway fathers do not represent 'alternative styles.' Families have primary responsibility for instilling traits such as discipline, ambition, respect for the law, and regard for others."

Brazelton, a vociferous advocate for better and affordable childcare, concurs with Galston's assessment of the importance of the family in promoting the well-being of the child and urges the nation to help working parents face the stresses of family life. Providing affordable childcare at a time when working parents need to turn to outside help in order to cope with the stresses of jobs and family life is better for the child. Further-

more, it will also make the lives of their mothers and fathers easier and in turn it will bring greater stability to the family.

"At a time when nearly 50 percent of all marriages end up in divorce, maintaining family life is a high-risk venture," according to Brazelton. Yet both Galston and Brazelton argue that the family pattern as we know it—mother, father and children—is still worth upholding. The success of the AHAs legitimizes their views that the family unit is worth preserving. To the question posed by Leslie (1979) at the introduction of this chapter as to whether the traditional family is the only way to raise children successfully, I answer that it may not be the *only* way, but it surely worked when it came to producing the AHAs—a very fine group of people.

What about the altered family compositions comprised of step-parents and step-children? It has been estimated that 16 percent or 7.3 million children live with step-parents (Martin, 1994). What about the households headed by couples who are not married to each other? What about the children who are living with their grandparents? If these nontraditional family configurations function together as families and if they learn to cope with their responsibilities, then these changing family structures should be stable enough to produce AHAs. It should still be good and pleasant for children raised in these homes.

When Family Bonds are Weak—The Impact on Child's Development

What is worrisome is the house—for it is no longer a home—where family members no longer dwell closely together. The word "family" cannot even be used because there is no real kinship in many of the dwellings in which children are being reared by single mothers, disconnected from fathers and alienated from other family members. Over 10 million children live in single-family homes (Martin, 1994). What is especially frightening is that far larger numbers of these children live in poverty than those who live with both their parents.

The Carnegie Corporation report *Starting Points: Meeting the Needs of Our Youngest Children* (1994) also notes that many of the youngsters today who are not reared in the two-parent home, as was typical for the AHAs, spend much of their time with day-care providers who are only providing minimal, but certainly not quality, care. Acknowledging that a child's earliest

years play an important role in development, such children will be ill prepared to meet the demands of a formal education. They will be entering their formal schooling program lacking the requisite tools that we identify with school readiness. These children will differ in academic readiness from those children whose families can avail themselves of the excellent parenting center like the 92nd Street Y's. How to reach such families is one of the pressing challenges facing our society and one we cannot afford to ignore.

Community educational programs that can be available to these families at no or very low cost must be developed. It is essential that we begin assisting these parents with their children's upbringing as soon as possible. We know that the gap between the haves and the have nots grows wider with each passing year and so the sooner remediation is initiated, the better the chances for the child to overcome such early handicaps.

One highly-regarded antipoverty program that attempted to address the remediation needs of pre-school children living in poverty was the Head Start project started by the federal government thirty years ago. After serving thirteen million children and receiving bipartisan support from our lawmakers, 1994 marked the year that the program was going to be made available to all the nation's eligible children. Zigler and Styfco (1994), commenting on both the achievements and limitations of the Head Start program, say the following: "Head Start has come to be regarded as a sound investment, a cost-effective means of reducing school and social failure among children in poverty." However, the 1995 Congress, with its belt-tightening attitude, may fail to provide the funds for a program that attempts to enhance the educational chances for millions of children who live in disadvantaged homes. In my opinion Zigler and Styfco's assessment of the value of the Head Start program is sound and Congress' failure to fully fund it may cost this nation far more in the future—in dollars and in human lives.

Educating for Parenting

How will the many children who are growing up today in homes without the loving and guiding hands of nurturing parents manage in the future with the care of their own children? The death of Myrtle McGraw in 1988 was very sad because she was a pioneer psychologist at Teachers College, Columbia University, who combined clinical observational studies with edu-

cational-psychological theories to arrive at significant conclusions on child development. An edition of the American Psychologist (August 1990) featured an autobiographical article in which she concluded with a statement of behavior that reflects my precise feelings in her own beautiful words and that suggests an answer to my question.

> With the decline of the kinship family and the instability of the nuclear family, it becomes society's responsibility to develop new methods or techniques of inculcating in present day teenagers the art of observing and interpreting behavior in growing infants before they bear their own. Educational programs that develop such skills in our young people must be designed now in preparation for the unknown needs of the 21st century. We can't imagine what the new century would be like but we can instruct our growing children in how to adjust to sudden change. Anyway it's worth a try. (p.937)

Educational programs have to be developed with the goal of teaching good parenting and the importance and worth of close family relationships even before our youngsters become parents. There is no doubt that we need to strengthen the importance of good family relationships in the development of the individual. We cannot rely on family tradition, as did the large majority of the AHAs. There are too many children who come from single-parent homes or homes where there has been much discord, before and after the divorce. They lack the experience of a family who functions in harmony.

Even students reared in homes with two parents need courses that address the future family responsibilities of dual-career mothers and fathers. The rapidly evolving roles of men and women and the fact that women now make up nearly fifty percent of the workforce demands such courses. Women are still viewed as the primary caregivers for children, even though they make up so much of the workforce. Although men are increasingly helping their wives in the household, too many "young men have yet to completely adopt the fatherhood mandate as part of their role requirements (Lawson, 1990).

Courses on parenting and family relationships should be introduced into the high school curricula and required of both young men and women. Years ago such courses were taught in the Home Economics Department to primarily female students. To many people in the educational field, these courses were seen only as homemaking courses. Failing to full understand

the aims of the courses in the home economics curriculum, many of our nation's schools removed them from their curricula.

According to Patricia Thompson (1984), in the preface to *Home Economics Teacher Education*, "Home Economics alone among the disciplines addresses the knowledge questions inherent in feeding, housing, clothing, nurturing, and caring and connecting that confront individuals and families over their lifetimes. They are the perennial problems faced by humankind."

When we examine Dr. Thompson and colleagues' Home Economics books *Lifespans* (1987) and *Resources for Living* (1987), which include chapters on childcare, family planning, nutrition, and ecology, it is apparent that today's youngsters of both sexes can benefit from these topics pertaining to the home and family. Home economics or family living courses can provide the kinds of information that had been handed down from generation to generation in the homes of the AHAs.

Whether it is Home Economics courses in the high schools, community-based parenting courses, or classes taught in religious centers, youngsters should get a good dose of information on the value of good family relationships. Some of these young people will establish traditional nuclear families; much more likely many will become part of the growing number of new family patterns. Whatever their choices, the investment in these courses will reap benefits for the students themselves, their future children and our society as a whole. That the outlook for our children's futures, as well as this nation's, is linked to the rekindling of family values was underscored for me in the title Benjamin Spock chose for his latest book: *A Better World for Our Children: Rebuilding America's Family Values (1994)*.

8

Conclusions: What are the Practical Applications?

The author of this book had the rare opportunity to study a population of high academic achievers in an age range spanning several generations. They all were elected to the Phi Beta Kappa Society, the national academic honor society, based largely on outstanding academic grades, mostly in the A range. Qualifications for election represented the academic ideals developed in 1776 and extended with relatively minor changes to the present time.

As an active member of this august body, I had access to this population; as a researcher, I was aware that with this sample I could explore the factors that accounted for their academic success in school. The studies had teased out those threads that characterized the very high academic achiever. The studies also demonstrated that these students didn't simply work for high grades but generally became well-rounded, fulfilled individuals with good family relationships and wide interests. Yet what else was learned?

Going Beyond the Data

After analyzing the data and thinking about the many AHAs I have known over these many years, I searched for enlightenment to explain their success on the academic ladder and for words to characterize their mode of behavior, as well as the resources for this behavior, that went beyond the statistics.

For one thing, AHAs can be portrayed as individuals with high achievement motivation. Their goal, however, is not power, money, or fame, but rather using their talents, especially their scholarship, to the fullest. If fame comes to them, they are modest about it. They do not use fame for an ego trip. They also happily credit and acknowledge the success of their colleagues.

Secondly, they make well-reasoned choices, fully cognizant that choice brings obligations. Marriage and parenthood are important responsibilities. They try to choose marriage partners carefully because a good family life is important to them. When children come, AHAs for the most part make good parents, much as they make good mentors or colleagues, encouraging their children to do their best, taking pride in their accomplishments, but being tolerant and understanding of their shortcomings. They want time to spend with their families. AHAs are very supportive parents, as they are supportive grandparents, aunts, uncles, and friends.

The AHAs are not just high academic achievers. They wish to succeed in interpersonal relations and enjoy interacting with others. They also make time to attend cultural events, films, theater, and museums, and to enjoy the company of their friends. However, they do not go in for posh parties, showy clothing, and display of wealth. They receive their gratifications through doing things other than making lots of money, though they want and enjoy financial security.

AHAs are decisive, persistent, and tenacious individuals, setting definite goals for themselves and striving to attain them, but they are also flexible people, not afraid to change direction when warranted. They are intellectually curious and they are not fearful of daring and taking chances, especially intellectual ones. They are also able to delay immediate gratification, awaiting the larger more meaningful goal.

Through their competence they have gained an ego-strength that, when joined with their self-discipline—which was initiated in the home and then more fully developed in the classroom environment—allowed them to manage more than competently in areas other than the scholarly. Their self-discipline provided for the evolution of those types of habits that made them good employees, dependable family members, and appreciated friends. They enjoy the praise and esteem of their fellow students, colleagues, and associates.

Did any of these achievers with their sharp intellectual skills realize creative genius in their chosen professions? Subotnik,

Kassan, Summers & Wasser (1993) believe that "the true genius, the one who in some way transforms the world, or at the very least, his or her field, is likely to be driven, compulsive and never fully contented" (p.119). The AHAs would not match this definition of genius because they clearly demonstrated that they did not sacrifice the joys of family life, friendships, social pleasures, and community obligations for their intellectual pursuits. These AHAs are also happy with themselves, pleased with their professional choices, experience good physical and mental health, and are satisfied with their lives.

Continuing with Subotnik and her colleagues' definition of genius, which they share with other academicians, we would have to assume that the AHAs of this study would not be counted among the "elite circle of geniuses." Yet we know that some of them, certainly not all by any means, attained renowned status in their chosen fields, ostensibly the result of the display of unusual creative skills. These "special" AHAs had found the secret that allowed them to combine extraordinary professional talent with a "life centered on satisfying and meaningful relationships."

As for most of the AHAs in these studies, we can conclude that they became productive citizens who are content with the choices they have made in life and appear to have found happiness. In general, these AHAs are a remarkable segment of the American population who have fulfilled the American dream. This is not the American dream of great wealth but of a healthy, happy life with rewarding interpersonal relations. We are dealing here with general "wellness." What more can we want or expect people to be?

GENERALIZING FROM THE AHAS TO ALL CHILDREN

Do the conclusions from these studies on AHAs—who were certainly not average or typical in their time—apply to a younger generation of parents and children who are so different? The student bodies now are far less homogeneous than in the days of the respondents and the range of ethnicity is much broader now.

Also the range of college courses offered to students now is very different from what it was when the AHAs went to school. The relationship between upper level studies to prospective income is much more clear-cut today than it used to be, while the appeal of broad liberal arts studies that include mathematics,

languages, literature, art, and music has markedly diminished. The attraction of the size of the future paycheck certainly supercedes the lure of a body of knowledge.

All these changes have happened very quickly and practically every college has dropped courses in philosophy, classics, languages, and literature while adding courses in communication, accounting, nursing, geriatrics, and business. However, vocational preferences do change so that many of the studies attempting to guide people toward vocational success cannot forecast accurately and I question whether they ever could. To place high value on studies linked toward future vocational success and happiness may be pointless or, at least, misguided.

Yet one cannot deny the link between education and vocational success and financial security. Academic achievement will enhance opportunities for better jobs and higher remuneration. Without discounting the importance of education in preparing one for the work world, the ability to learn for the sheer pleasure of learning promises added rewards. The sense of self-pride and confidence that the love of learning gave the AHAs contributed significantly to their life satisfaction and this is certainly a much-desired bonus.

To the question of whether the conclusions from the studies of AHAs can be applied to today's younger generation, I answer "Definitely yes!" The lives of the AHAs who were examined and discussed in the previous chapters could well be studied by parents, educators, and social scientists.

Most parents today, like the parents of the AHA's generation, want to provide their children with the best of everything. They hope their children will be attractive, intelligent, and happy. In an attempt to secure this future for their children, many parents are willing to make sacrifices. What this book calls for is not sacrifices but the heeding of a set of principles and guidelines that parents should find helpful. They could well learn from the attitudes, work habits, and interests that made the AHAs successful in college and in the outside world, bringing them fuller, more satisfying lives.

But even more importantly, parents must pay very close attention to what was happening in the homes in which these AHAs were raised. It was here that the solid base for the future achievements of the AHAs was firmly rooted. The parents of these AHAs didn't simply direct their children to behave in certain ways; they served as models for their children to emulate.

You cannot tell your child that lateness or absence from

school is unacceptable if you are late for your own appointments or miss work regularly. I take great pride in my excellent attendance records at school; I was only marked down once for lateness in high school—and I felt that this was an error. My former students will also attest to my sublime record of attendance and for starting class at the sound of the bell.

When I insisted that my daughters attend class regularly and be there on time, they knew I meant business. Absence from school, without a very legitimate reason, was not tolerated in our home, by either my husband or me. When the girls went off to college and no longer were living under my supervision, nor under my carefully observant eye, they still felt obliged to make every class. They learned this lesson well from someone who practiced what she preached.

Parents who wish to instill the habit of reading in their children indeed must read themselves. The best way to teach reading to a child is to show your child how desirable you find reading. Again, on a personal note, there is a joke at my house about how lucky my children were as babies to have had the food reach their mouths because I always had my eyes on some reading material while feeding them. That these children knew how to read at an early age was not due to any teaching instructions received in our household; rather it was the example my husband and I set for them.

Also there were always many books in our home, for our children as well as for ourselves. We, like the parents of the AHAs, read to our children daily when they were too young to read themselves and listened to them read when they were learning to do so. Reading was appreciated early in our home and served as the underpinning to my children's later formal education. For those parents who cannot afford to purchase books for the home, there are many libraries available for their children, despite the cutbacks in hours suffered by some of them. Parents must set aside some time to take their young children to the library; as the children grow older they will look forward to these library trips on their own.

This tradition of books and reading has passed down to my grandchildren. My daughter and her husband can afford to purchase books, and so there are many on my older grandson's shelves as there will be for Brian's younger brother when he is old enough to read. Still it was with great pride and delight that little Brian signed for his own library card at the tender age of five years.

When children start school, parents have to understand that the ultimate responsibility for educating their children rests principally with them, not the schools. I am not simply discussing the involvement of the parents within a school through the Parents Association but, on a much broader scale, the active participation of an individual student's parents in the child's studies. That is to say that the individual child's parents must be aware of what is being taught in the classroom. Parents should not hesitate to inquire about the grade curriculum.

Inquiry should not be interpreted as interference by the teachers of these children. Good teachers appreciate parents who follow their child's progress in school and view parents as partners in the educational process. The parents of the AHAs were wholeheartedly involved in the education of their children and their children reaped the benefits of their dedication.

The AHAs came to school well prepared for the demands of the classroom. They brought with them the requisite self-confidence and assuredness that students require in order to participate freely and fully in class activities. Those traits that enabled these AHAs to function so effectively in the classroom were bred in homes where parents treated them fairly and respectfully. Children learn self-worth and gain confidence through the behavior and appraisals of their parents.

The parent who criticizes the child unduly breeds a child who is anxious and fearful of undertaking new tasks. On the other hand, the parent who praises the child's correct actions, carefully amending errors, and providing full opportunities for the right responses to come to the forefront, rears a child who is willing to risk a wrong answer in class. This same child will probably believe that more of his or her answers are likely to be right.

The parents of the AHAs were concerned about every aspect of their children's lives—their physical and mental health, their schooling, their social activities. They were loving, empathetic, and attentive parents and their interest in their children was not interpreted by the AHAs to be intrusive, overbearing, or demanding. These academic achievers did not resent their parents' requests to carry out their schoolwork and their home chores responsibly. When such requests are reasonable, as these apparently were, children don't take offense at them.

The home environment is an important determinant in academic achievement. The AHAs apparently were reared in homes with values and traditions that strengthened their familial ties,

and the AHAs in turn brought these values to their own family settings despite the fact that many more of the AHAs established homes where both parents worked. The families from which the AHAs came for the most part were stable, as were the families they founded. Both sets of families tended to be financially secure, though making money was not a central AHA family value. Rather, the focus was on helping, respecting, and loving each other. Such a focus favored academic fulfillment.

The parents of the AHAs did not live vicariously through their children's successes, nor did the AHAs do so with their children. The AHAs were tolerant of their children's educational setbacks and their need to venture forth into new areas on their own. That many of the AHA children received fine educations, though some returned to school after engaging in other nonacademic activities, reflected the family's high regard for learning that was transmitted to all the children.

What About the Children Who Are Cared for Less?

What about the children who come from homes where love and caring, as well as respect for learning, are seriously lacking? Children from such homes often become disadvantaged educationally from the moment they are conceived and their handicaps increase with age. By the time these children are ready for school, they are seriously lagging behind children who come from homes where the values and traditions are more in line with those of the AHAs. Do we simply give up on these children or should society assume the responsibility and attempt to overcome the shortcomings of the family and the home?

Richard J. Hernnstein and Charles Murray argue, though unconvincingly, in *The Bell Curve* (1994) that we should give up in our attempts to overcome educational deprivation in a large segment of our population—namely black children—because their deficient underlying core intelligence thwarts their scholastic attainments. Hernnstein and Murray's data, presented in the form of charts and graphs, seemingly advance their premises and assumptions as did the data of Arthur R. Jensen (1969), an earlier proponent of I. Q. differences between blacks and whites.

The response to Hernnstein and Murray by the professional world as well as the lay public has been overwhelming and will continue to be so for the next few years. Scholars will critique

and challenge the many points advanced by Hernnstein and Murray to support their conclusions that blacks are cognitively wanting. For now I would rather focus on one aspect of this controversy, the ability to forecast the likelihood that any single child, black or white, will succeed in the classroom.

The relative contributions of heredity and environment to the development of any single individual's intelligence are not known because environmental factors also come into play at the time of conception. Every person's intelligence is the product of the interaction of heredity and environment. Thus, not really knowing the inherent intellectual potential for any single child but knowing and having control over those environmental influences that can stretch intellectual potential to the fullest, the emphasis should be on providing *all* children with the best educational environment we can. I was certainly gladdened when the distinguished Stephen Jay Gould wrote that: "We must fight *The Bell Curve* both because it is wrong and because it will, if activated, cut off all possibility of proper nurturance for everyone's intelligence." (New Yorker, November 28, 1994).

Adding even greater weight to the importance of environmental influences in the transmission of behavioral characteristics is a recent report in the *Journal of Animal Behavior* (Avital & Jablonka, 1994), which proposes that humans can transmit characteristics from one generation to the next through learning. "The very DNA-centric view of heredity is wrong," said Dr. Jablonka in her New York Times interview (Angier, 1995). She continued: "It was useful and necessary for the development of genetics, but there is more to heredity than genes." Concerned that this theory does not conjure up the disproven ideas of Lemarck, the researchers Avital and Jablonka suggest that these learned behaviors are stamped in when the child is very young. Evolutionary behaviorists for some time now have suggested that useful patterns of behavior are being passed along in both animals and humans.

Certainly, most of us can point to characteristics, values, or interests that we've noticed amongst our aunts, uncles, cousins and other family members that appeared not to be handed down through genes but rather through custom and tradition. Hobbies, favorite sports teams, and cooking recipes are examples of what family members pass on from one generation to the next. As far as the AHAs were concerned, a strong case can be made that it was from their families that they received their early love of learning and they in turn passed it down to their children

who then lovingly conveyed the beauty of reading and learning to the next generation, the grandchildren of the AHAs. Wouldn't it be wonderful indeed if *all* children from the time they entered this world were exposed to this same kind of rich intellectual environment! Yet we know there are so many children who are deprived of such advantages.

ENVIRONMENTAL DEPRIVATIONS AND HARMFUL INTRUSIONS

What is even sadder is that for a large majority of these children, especially those living in poverty, it isn't really a matter of enrichments but rather one of deficiencies and harmful intrusions—and they come into play even before these children are born. The mental and intellectual capacity, as well as the physical development, of the growing fetus within the mother's womb can be adversely influenced by the mother's substandard diet. The child's physical and mental well-being can be further harmed if that child is maintained on a poor diet for any significant period of time after birth. Then there may be additional damage to the youngster's mental and physical health if as a toddler the child eats the peeling paint chips that often abound in the homes of poor families.

Whereas readers may be familiar with the literature addressing the harm caused by insufficient diets or the lead in paint chips, fewer will be familiar with the published reports warning of the dangers of a noisy environment on the developing fetus. Although the studies indicating lower birth weights and increased cases of such birth defects as cleft palates (Jones & Tauscher, 1978) among babies born to women who live near airports need further validation, the U. S. National Research Council Report (1982) has cautioned pregnant women to avoid working in noisy settings. With so few individuals cognizant of these noise studies, it is very likely that there has been damage to developing fetuses whose mothers lived near noisy airports or worked in very noisy factories. The literature on noise essentially has dealth with physical defects but we cannot ignore the potential relationship between the physical and the mental.

As was noted earlier, Wachs (1990) discovered that noise can slow down a child's cognitive and language development during the toddler stage. So the child brought up in a noisy home begins to fall behind in learning ability even before entering school. Another theorist (Deutsch, 1964) had speculated that

the child reared in a noisy environment learns to tune out the noises, and so fails to learn to discriminate between relevant and irrelevant speech cues. The child reared in such a home comes to school less able to pay more attention to the teacher's words than to the competing extraneous sounds emanating from the other students or the outside environment. This failure to follow relevant acoustic cues might explain subsequent difficulty in learning how to read.

PARENTAL OVERSIGHTS?

Then there are those parents who fail to optimize that child's potentials or parents who don't ask the child to push to the limits of that child's abilities. The children of such parents will not fulfill their inherent promise. There are also parents who fail to recognize visual or auditory deficits in their children and these undiagnosed disabilities may impede their children's learning ability. The latter is not so unusual in homes with parents who may be overburdened with all sorts of problems and don't have the time to carefully observe their children.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS: A MAJOR INFLUENCE

What has been cited above is only a partial list of those environmental factors that can prevent a child from developing his or her full potential. However, enough should have been said to convince readers that the child's physical, mental, social, and personal growth all are heavily dependent on the environments to which that child is exposed.

What made the difference in the lives of the AHAs is that they came from homes that provided the appropriate environmental stimuli for them when they were children, allowing them to maximize their potentials; homes where parents were especially alert to their needs; homes that placed a strong value on learning and education. What is presently so distressing is that so many of our nation's children don't come from these types of homes that contributed so heavily to the success of the AHAs.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF DEDICATED TEACHERS

Furthermore, teachers also play a role in augmenting potential and this was evidenced by the AHAs who reported that their

teachers expected and demanding more from them. It is feared that teachers influenced by the musings of a Jensen or the less-than-scientifically supported ideas of a Hernnstein and a Murray might set lower standards for those children who come from disadvantaged homes and these students in turn will perform at these lower levels.

Although the work of Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) on the self-fulfilling prophecy, which suggested that teachers' expectations of their students could make them more or less successful in the classroom, has been criticized for inaccurate statistics, their findings regarding expectancy cannot be denied. The research was indeed faulty but the conclusions, which have been borne out by the comments made by the AHAs and others who have had supportive teachers, are not. There is no doubt that teachers can influence the performance outcome of their students.

WHAT ABOUT CHILDREN FROM DIFFERENT ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS?

Unquestionably there are those individuals in all ethnic groups who are endowed with greater intellectual potential and others with less, but it is still my conviction that most children, white or black, have the ability to take advantage of educational opportunities provided these are offered to them. To those who would deny blacks educational opportunity, I wish to remind them of the time when women were treated as less worthy of education than men. It was widely purported that women lacked the aptitude and talent necessary to pursue rigorous educational programs.

So women were barred from attending some of the finest of our nation's colleges, accepted in lower numbers at others, and many women were simply channeled into business and secretarial courses that did not require college training. Fewer women received prestigious college degrees and only small numbers of them were represented in the most esteemed professions.

The ensuing struggle by women for greater equality knocked down many of the educational barriers and women were admitted to college in greater numbers. Presently there are many colleges where women are actually in the majority and there is far less talk of their inability to undertake the most arduous professions and careers. So what happened to the once existing educational and professional disparity between men and women?

Apparently when the educational doors are opened to women, they enter in large numbers. They also exit in large numbers, many with exemplary academic records. Despite their outstanding performance at college, women still were not eligible for the highly prestigious Rhodes scholarships until 1976. Women are now the proud recipients of such scholarships and in 1994 more women than men, 18 to 14, made their way into Oxford University as Rhodes scholars (New York Times, 1994).

Similarly, Phi Beta Kappa was also slow to grant excellent women scholars equal recognition in its esteemed society. In his book tracing the history of Phi Beta Kappa, *Phi Beta Kappa in American Life* (1990), Dr. Current informs us that women were first admitted to the society in the latter part of the nineteenth century, more than one hundred years after its founding in 1776. In examining the data on the number of women initiated into the society, Dr. Current reports how quickly their number increased once the first few were admitted.

When the number of women granted the golden key began to increase rapidly, the society's leadership, hopefully only representing a minority viewpoint, feared the loss of its reputation that it believed was based on the performance of its outstanding male members. It is somewhat amusing and at the same time disheartening to read Dr. Current's description of how experts were called in to analyze the reasons why women were excelling at their studies. They agreed that it certainly couldn't be the mental superiority of these women. Women's excellence, they argued, was due to the fact that they worked harder than men, led less interesting lives, and often sacrificed their social engagements for their high grades in school. Furthermore, Phi Beta Kappa women would never accomplish professionally at the same rate as the Phi Beta Kappa men.

More recently when we look at the number of men and women initiated each year into the Phi Beta Kappa Society, we find that in 1980 men and women were admitted in equal numbers but ever since then the numbers for the women have been on the rise. In 1994, 8,082 women and 5,644 men were admitted to Phi Beta Kappa (Personal communication, February 1995). Let me immediately add that women are now serving in leadership roles in the society and the question about their ability to contribute to the organization's reputation is no longer viable.

Can this rather significant difference in the admissions rates between men and women be explained wholly or partially in

terms of attendance, with the possibility that greater numbers of women are enrolled in those colleges with Phi Beta Kappa chapters? The answer to this question is not known but if it were in the affirmative, then one might wonder whether women are better suited for these colleges than men. Whatever the explanation, there is only one conclusion, namely, that the men are not faring as well at the top as the women.

Should we take the lead from these fine Phi Beta Kappa gentlemen of days gone by and seek to limit the numbers of men admitted to our finer colleges because they are lacking in whatever in takes to succeed in the better schools? Furthermore, should we contemplate advising young males to seek careers that are less demanding based on their less than outstanding college records?

Just as there were people, including women, who accepted the then claimed limitations of women, and even worked to contain the expression of their talents, there are millions who will rush to support the conclusions put forward by Hernnstein and Murray; conclusions that will only serve to disadvantage black children even further. Educational dollars spent on black children will be wasted, claim Hernnstein and Murray, because education cannot overcome genetic liabilities. Such thinking will only lead to a widening of the educational gap that, in my opinion, has been magnified by a long tradition of inequitable treatment of blacks in this country.

Although this author strongly disagrees with Hernnstein and Murray's conclusions that many black members of our society are incapable of scholastic achievement, I do agree with their forecast that racial conflict may result from our failure to deal with the problems of a segment of the population who are struggling academically. The future of our nation depends on how we cope with the educational disparity between black and white children and cope we must.

What gives me hope that efforts to override early deprivations can indeed work is my long-term association with the City University of New York. Although my experiences were with college students, not younger children, these students entered college in need of a great deal of remediation. In 1968 the City University of New York initiated a program called open admissions or open enrollment, which promised a college education to New York City high school graduates, many of them minority students, who did not quite measure up to the high academic entrance requirements for which the university had long been acclaimed.

That the admissions requirements had been lowered for many New York City high school students so they could enter City University will not be denied but that the university surrendered to mediocrity, as James Traub declares in *City on a Hill* (1994), will be vociferously disputed. Mr. Traub's conclusion is derived after spending eight months at City College, one of the units of the City University. My opinion about what happened at the university after open enrollment is based on nearly forty years of experience, three as a student and the remainder as a faculty member.

Mr. Traub bemoans the so-called fall of this distinguished college, City College, which in the past produced Nobel winners in science and renowned scholars in all of fields of learning. Although Mr. Traub applauds the number of fine students still enrolled at City College, he is critical of the large number whom he believes have seriously contributed to the diminished standards of the college. He goes on to explain the failure of many of these newly admitted students to graduate by pointing to a home and family environment that did not instill the desire for knowledge; the very opposite of the family encouragement and support that were the underlying forces that contributed significantly to the success of the AHAs.

However, that are still many students who entered under the open enrollment initiative who have succeeded, despite their faulty start, and their success should be neither easily dismissed nor readily overlooked. We should focus on these students, celebrate their victories, and take hope from their achievements, rather than continually grieving over those who have not yet prospered.

Many of the students in my classes came from single-parent homes, from homes where no family member had ever attended college, and from homes that had deprived them of the sustenance that was so plentiful in the homes of most of the AHAs. Yet they made it to the doors of the college; though largely devoid of the love of learning and the expectation of success that the AHAs brought with them to their college studies. Whatever bolstered them during their early college days may be difficult to identify but in time it was obvious that an appreciation for scholarship and knowledge were acquired by many if not all of these students.

Too many of these students had to attend college while working full-time and many were single mothers who had children to care for. Too little time was available for their studies and so

one can fully understand why many of them were not able to prevail, despite their strong will to acquire a college education.

Those students who surmounted the odds, the obstacles, and the years of deprivation performed beyond all their expectations and aspirations; with some earning Phi Beta Kappa keys and others winning prizes in a wide variety of academic areas. What was also evident was that many of my university colleagues were especially supportive of these open admissions students in their quest to achieve. For the first time these students were told that they could do well academically, and they acquired the kind of self-assurance that had been attained at an earlier age by the AHAs of this book.

This newly acquired self-confidence plus the reassurance from their teachers that they could undertake college work and do it well spurred them on to do better and better at their studies. Many students admitted under the open admissions policy have graduated, though frequently after more than four years, and in growing numbers each year go on to graduate school. In the coming years even more of these entrants to the City University will complete their college studies.

The present City University population is reminiscent of the students who attended these colleges in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They too were from poor families, many of them children of immigrants of Jewish and Eastern and Southern European Catholic background. The educational performance of those students, who were being given a chance to earn a college degree at a free institution, was far from remarkable at the start. However, with the passing years, the families of these students gained in the numbers of relatives who held college degrees and education became a highly valued treasure as well as the stepping stone to professional and financial success. The children of these immigrant and poor families were now expected to excel in college and they became the exceptional students recalled so fondly by Mr. Traub.

I predict that in future years the majority of black and Hispanic students attending this very same university will also be coming from homes where one, if not more, of the family members will be college graduates. The tradition of learning will have been established in these homes as they were in the homes of those wonderful City University students of thirty and forty years ago and in the homes of the AHAs. The future graduates of the City University of New York will shine in their academic studies. They will win awards and prizes, and people will

speak of them in the same glowing way as they have of all the extraordinary students who preceded them.

Why are my predictions for the future students of the City University of New York made with such enthusiasm and optimism? Quite simply, it is my long-term association with these students that imbues me with such a solid belief in their future academic triumphs. Although academically lacking at the start of their college careers, the ardent desire on the part of so many of my students to become educated and surmount their shortcomings has always impressed me. Their desire was strong enough to overcome the daily hardships and stresses unfamiliar to those traditional middle-class students fortunate enough to be born to parents who had always encouraged their educational dreams, financially and otherwise.

THE LOVE OF LEARNING: A MESSAGE FOR EVERYONE

My friends and colleagues know that learning and education have always been central to my life and very being and for that reason wonder about my strong commitment to a student body who, on the face of it, were not comprised of the most sterling students. What they fail to understand is that an individual dedicated to a life of learning is even more appreciative of those individuals who become similarly pledged in the face of great adversity.

How much easier it is for the child reared in a home where parents care about learning and education to adopt similar sentiments! On the other hand, what a formidable task it must be for the youngster reared in a home that places little if any value on learning to seek out knowledge on one's own initiative. Such young people should be applauded and exalted. Undoubtedly they were assisted by teachers, family friends or counselors who recognized their desire and thirst for knowledge.

As a professor I relished my role as mentor to youngsters who had come to school from homes where parents had little formal education, where books were few and learning was not part of their early lives as it had been for so many of the AHAs. Success with such students was ever so much sweeter.

The love of learning starts in the home and is strengthened and fortified by capable and caring teachers in the school system. The best students, including the AHAs, have come from families that took personal responsibility for, and pride in, the

education of their children. However, reality informs me that there are and will be many youngsters who cannot count on their homes as their primary schools. Such youngsters, reared in homes where learning and education are not coveted, will have to depend on the nation's schools and the society as a whole to instill in them the joy of learning that brought infinite pleasure to all the AHAs.

The family that is living at a precarious subsistence level simply can't be expected to do what the families of the AHAs did, especially when the family is headed by a single parent, perhaps hardworking and uneducated, or perhaps someone who has survived for an entire lifetime on public assistance. There are probably many children in these homes, who, if properly nurtured, can become AHAs.

What about the hordes of largely inner-city children who are living in what are now called "zero-parent" homes (Gross, 1992)—living with relatives, in foster homes, in institutions, or simply on the streets. These youngsters are living in neighborhoods overrun with drugs, AIDS, and guns. Teachers and school administrators often don't know the names of the people with whom these youngsters are living, don't even know the students' last names, and only keep them on school registers for short periods of time. These young people are always on the move—from foster home to foster home and from one school to the next. Who will be responsible for the education of these children? Without a doubt, there are potential AHAs among them.

A caring and concerned nation should be ready to assume the responsibilities that were so willingly and beautifully discharged by the families of the AHAs, and give this nation's economically deprived children the chance to learn and to harvest the bliss that only learning and knowledge can sustain. However, it is not merely a matter of disinterested or abstract concern. From a practical perspective, our society as a whole will be greatly enriched by educational efforts expended on behalf of these youngsters—far more than the individual rewards that will accrue to each youngster so helped.

As this nation considers the cost of educating the millions of children who are existing on the edge of society, it becomes obvious that dollars must come from the private sector as well. Taking the initiative in this area is philanthropist Walter Annenberg, who clearly understands the necessity of reaching out to these inner-city disadvantaged youngsters. As part of his $500 million dollar pledge for public education, he has selected

New York as one of five cities to receive $50 million dollar grants aimed at "shaking up and reworking a failing urban education system" (New York Times, 1994). The Center for Educational Innovation, a nonprofit organization that is part of the coalition involved in creating the new schools envisioned by Mr. Annenberg, has said that the "Annenberg grant thus provides the catalyst for what could become the most significant advance in public education this century" (Center for Education Innovation, 1994). Despite the hopes for this program, there are still many skeptics who wonder whether the Annenberg dollars will bring meaningful and long-lasting changes to our urban schools which are plagued by so many problems, not the least of which includes fulfilling the demands of competing constituencies (Applebome, 1995).

The scientist in me knows we must wait to ascertain whether Mr. Annenberg and his educational partners will achieve their goals. Yet the dreamer in me is charged and excited by the undertaking and the promise of a more learned student body. Probably this excitement was stimulated by my presence at the inauguration of a new school in New York City, The High School for Environmental Studies, which is the first of its kind in the country.

As I watched the faces of the rhapsodic students and listened to the talks of an equally spirited and zealous group of administrators, faculty, and community leaders, I got caught up in the spirit generated by the opening of this new school. The pride in all the faces of the attendees convinced me that public high schools are capable of inspiring and motivating students. This group of committed faculty, administrators and parents working together toward a common goal—that of providing students with both an excellent education and an exciting learning experience—have joined as one to create the type of academic environment in which AHAs will thrive and prosper.

There is no doubt that the enthusiasm for learning witnessed at this high school can be duplicated in schools throughout this country. But first there must be the *will* to do so—from parents, teachers, community leaders, public officials and all citizens working in unison. Hopefully, the story of these splendid academic achievers as well as the author's ideas and ruminations might serve to ignite this willpower in some of the readers of *Top of the Class*.

APPENDIX A
FAMILY STRUCTURE QUESTIONNAIRE

Sex _____ Age _____ Occupation _____ Academic Degrees _____ Retired _____

Please fill in the table below, listing your siblings by age beginning with the oldest. If a sibling is deceased, list the age this person would have reached if still alive, but follow with the age at death in the next column. If any child was adopted, or is a half or step-sibling, please note this fact in the explanation column. Under the Phi Beta Kappa and Sigma Xi Columns place a check mark if the individual was elected to either.

Sibling	*Sex*	*Present Age*	*Age at Death*	*Occupation*	*Highest Degree*	*PBK*	*Sigma Xi*	*Explanation*
Oldest								
Next								
Next								
Next								
Next								
Next								

If you or any of your siblings have attained eminence in any field, would you please place a check to the left of the first column representing that person and describe below, along with any other comment. If this is true of more than one sibling, use double and triple check marks to discriminate. We are acting on the assumption that you and your siblings grew up in the same household. If this is not correct, please explain below in as much detail as you can since we are vitally interested in family relationships. Thank you.

Appendix B
PHI BETA KAPPA
FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS STUDY

Name _____ Address _____

1. Please fill in the chart below, listing yourself and your sisters and brothers (siblings) beginning with the oldest. Please circle under the first column the line which represents yourself. If you, or any of your brothers or sisters were adopted, or is a step- or half-sibling, please note under relationship.

Sibling	*Sex*	*Year of Birth*	*If dead, death yr.*	*Relationship (see above)*	*Student or Occupation*	*Coll. Grad.?*	*Marital Status**	*No. of children*
Oldest								
Second								
Third								
Fourth								

*Legend: S-Single; L-Living with someone; E-Engaged; M1-First marriage; M2-Second marriage; M3-Third marriage; Sp.-Separated; D-Divorced; W-Widowed.

2. If you have children, please fill in chart below.

Children	*Sex*	*Year of Birth*	*If dead, death yr.*	*Relationship**	*Student or Occupation*	*Yrs. of Educ. Completed*	*Marital Status***
Oldest							
Second							
Third							
Fourth							

*Legend: N-Natural; A-Adopted **See Legend, Question 1

3. If you have grandchildren, how many? _____
Comment:

4. In which of the following categories of annual income does your household fall? (Circle one)

a) under $25,000 b) $25,000–$44,999 c) $45,000–$59,999 d) $60,000–$99,999 e) $100,000 and over

5. Place a check mark on the line below at the place which generally represents your status.
How do you feel about your career or occupation?

Very dissatisfied | Dissatisfied | Satisfied | Happy

6. Place a check mark on the line below at the place which generally represents your state.
How do you feel about your marriage?

Very dissatisfied | Dissatisfied | Satisfied | Happy

7. If you have adult children, how much attention and affection do you receive from them (allowing for geographic distance). (© Gail Sheehy 1978)

a) less than I want b) about as much as I want c) more than I want

8. Which of the following represents your present intention or, in retrospect, which would be your choice?

a) not to have children b) to have one child

c) to have ___ children (insert #) Comment (optional) _____

9. How much formal education did your parents have? Occupation?

	Education	*Occupation*
Mother		
Father		

10. Briefly describe your outside activities, other than work and family duties.

Activity	*Approx. Aver. Hrs. Per Week*
a) Social	
b) Physical	
c) Political	
d) Community	
e) Organizational	
f) Educational	
g) Religious	
h) Other	

11. In sum, how would you rate your life generally? Place check mark on line below.

Very dissatisfied | Dissatisfied | Satisfied | Happy

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APPENDIX C
PHI BETA KAPPA FIFTY+ QUESTIONNAIRE

I. *PHYSICAL HEALTH*

1. Assuming your physician's point of view, rate your general physical health.

very poor	poor	average	good	excellent

2. Parents' ages, if living. Mother _____ Father _____
   If deceased, age at death. Mother _____ Father _____

3. Over your lifetime, which word best describes your use of alcoholic beverages?

abstinence (never)	rarely	social functions only	frequent	alcoholic

4. Do you smoke at this time? Yes _____ No _____
   Did you ever smoke? Yes _____ No _____ If yes, at what age did you stop?

5. List medications you now take on a regular basis.

   _____

   _____

6. Sexual activity should be maintained as long as possible?
   Yes_____ No_____

II. *MENTAL HEALTH*

1. How would you rate your mental health?

very poor	poor	average	good	excellent

2. Have you ever had occasion to use any form of psychotherapy?

No	Briefly (under 1 year)	1–5 years	over 5 years

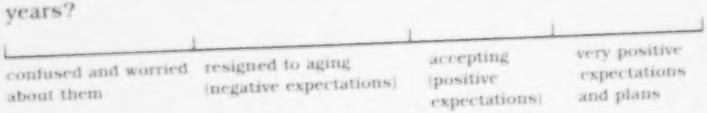
3. If used, how would you rate psychotherapy?

not beneficial	somewhat beneficial	very helpful

4. Using the broad concept of religion as spirituality, in the sense of openness and universal order, rate yourself on scale below.

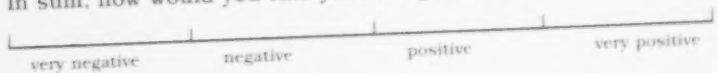
atheist (Not religious nor spiritual)	somewhat religious (Identify with religious or spiritual group)	fairly religious (Attend services quite regularly)	deeply committed and concerned with spiritual or religious matters

5. Which of the following best describes your view of your future years?


confused and worried about them
resigned to aging (negative expectations)
accepting (positive expectations)
very positive expectations and plans

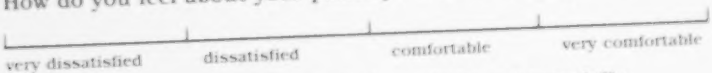
6. If ever married, how do you feel about marriage?

7. In sum, how would you rate your life generally?



III. *VOCATIONAL*

1. How do you feel about your primary career or occupation?



2. *Check* those factors in the list below which substantially affected your vocational choice?

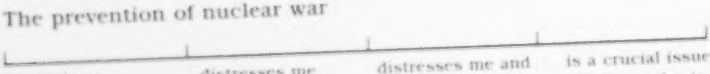
economics ___ parental expectations ___ humanitarian interests ___ instructor(s) ___
gender ___ other (specify) _____

3. Do you now contemplate vocational change? Yes ___ No ___
If yes, *check* most appropriate phrase(s).
   a) an entirely new career ___
   b) gradually reducing my work load ___
   c) increasing scope and responsibilities in my present occupation ___
   d) devoting a large part of my energies to betterment of human condition ___
   e) devoting myself to leisure
   f) other (specify) ___

4. I consider my financial situation now and for the forseeable future

IV. *ATTITUDES*

1. The prevention of nuclear war


has little or no effect on my happiness
distresses me but I do not become involved
distresses me and I often contribute to peace movements
is a crucial issue and I'm active in anti-war efforts

2. My attitude toward euthanasia is
   a) favorable ___ b) unfavorable ___ c) no opinion ___

3. I believe capital punishment should be
   a) abolished ___ b) permissible in rare cases ___

4. I believe abortion should be
   a) outlawed ___ b) permissible (e.g. rape, incest) ___
   c) decision of mother ___

5. The role of money in my life is

unimportant	somewhat important	very important	crucial

6. Politically, I am

consistently conservative	usually conservative	usually liberal	consistently liberal

Sex ___ Age ___ City and State of Residence _____

Marital status (at present) _____ # Children ___ # Grandchildren ___

Highest level of educational achievement _____ Occupation _____

Name (optional) _____ Address _____

Comments (use other side)

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